Tales From Two Rivers VI

Tales From Two Rivers VI

Tales From Two Rivers VI

edited by John E. Hallwas and Alfred J. Lindsey

A Publication of

Two Rivers Arts Council
Spoon River College
Macomb, Illinois

Copyright 1995 by Two Rivers Arts Council

Library of Congress Card No. 81-51362

The cover photograph, "Saturday afternoon in Lima, Illinois, 1908," by John Thornton was donated to the Two Rivers Arts Council by Truman Waite.
Other photographs in this book are courtesy of
Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University Library.

The stories contained in *Tales from Two Rivers I, II, III, IV, V,* and *VI* were selected from manuscripts submitted by Illinois authors, over sixty years of age, to annual *Tales from Two Rivers* writing contests. This documentation of the social history of Illinois as written by those who lived it is sponsored and published by the Two Rivers Arts Council, with partial funding by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. These books have been sold nationally beginning with *Tales I* in 1982, and are also available at local outlets and through the TRAC office. Phone 309/837-4413.

Two Rivers Arts Council

A consortium of western Illinois communities working
to support the arts for the people of this region.

Board of Directors

President
Yvonne Knapp
Raritan

1st Vice-President
Steve Larimer
Macomb

2nd Vice-President
Mary Kubasak
Macomb

3rd Vice-President
Pam Carson Johnson
Macomb

Secretary
June Marlette
LaHarpe

Treasurer
Sharon Graham
Biggsville

Director
Kim Funk
Rushville

Director
Carolyn Strong
Rushville

Director
Tim Schroll
Colchester

Director
Dee Dee Pensinger
Marietta

Director
Chester Lien
Macomb

Director
Jim O'Toole
Macomb

Contents

Acknowledgments i

I People with a Lasting Influence 1

PEOPLE WITH A LASTING INFLUENCE *John E. Hallwas* 3
MARY L. DIXSON OF STRONGHURST *Martha K. Graham* 5
MEMORIES OF MRS. BREWER *Avis L. Hutchins* 7
LEARNING TO SEE *Zelda Hedden Sellman* 9
MY POOR VIOLIN TEACHER *Signa Lorimer* 10
A LEGACY FROM MY MOTHER *Eva Baker Watson* 11
REMARKABLE KITTIE SIMMONS *James B. Jackson* 13
EVERYBODY CALLED HIM "FRIDAY" *Truman W. Waite* 14
MORE THAN A FRIEND *Shirley Ballard* 16

II Childhood Fun 19

CHILDHOOD FUN *Alfred J. Lindsey* 21
ANOTHER WORLD *Bonnie Lee Berry* 23
HOMESPUN FUN *Marie Freesmeyer* 24
LITTLE LADIES AT PLAY *Mavis Alexander* 26
THE GAMES WE PLAYED *Katherine Cravens* 28
SKATING ON THE MISSISSIPPI *Florence Ourth* 30
SUMMERTIME—FUN-TIME *Helen C. Harless* 31
THE BUILDERS *Margaret E. Artman* 33
OUR COUNTRY LANE *Helen E. Rilling* 35

SUMMERTIME FUN—HOOKED ON FISHING *Ida P. Dunsing* 37
THE SNOW WAR *Glenna Lamb* 38

III *Starting Out in the Thirties* 41

STARTING OUT IN THE THIRTIES *John E. Hallwas* 43
EARLY MARRIED LIFE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION *Rosemary Strow* 45
A MEAGER BEGINNING *Marie Freesmeyer* 46
"FARM WIFERY" IN THE THIRTIES AND FORTIES *Helen E. Rilling* 48
STRUGGLING TO MAKE IT WITH POULTRY *Elsa E. Schmidt* 49
GETTING STARTED IN ICE CREAM *Louise Parker Simms* 51
OUR THEATRE BUSINESS IN THE THIRTIES *Catherine Gerrib* 53
COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN THE EARLY THIRTIES
Robert C. Richards Sr. 55
MARRIED LIFE AT THE END OF THE DEPRESSION *Myrtle Pierson* 56

IV *Going to the Movies* 59

GOING TO THE MOVIES *Alfred J. Lindsey* 61
GRANDPA AND THE SATURDAY AFTERNOON PICTURE SHOW
D. R. Rockhill 63
HOUND OF TERROR *Jan Roberts* 65
GOLDEN MEMORIES OF THE SILVER SCREEN *Eleanor Jontry Brown* 67
THE ISIS THEATRE IN ROSEVILLE *Martha K. Graham* 69
SCENES BEHIND THE MOVIES *Ruth C. Van Horn* 71
SATURDAY AT THE MOVIES *Ruth Ferchow* 73
GOING TO THE MOVIES AT THE TIVOLI *Phyllis T. Fenton* 75
DRIVE-IN MOVIES—1940s STYLE *Tony Cichoke* 76
YELLOW BRICK ROADS LEAD TO . . . ANYWHERE *Dorothy M. Ross* 78

V *Working Decades Ago* 81

WORKING DECADES AGO *John E. Hallwas* 83
FAREWELL TO THE LINOTYPE *Ruth Gash Taylor* 85
WORKING IN A HOSPITAL LAB *Mary Dequimpaul* 86
SELLING NEWSPAPERS IN JACKSONVILLE *William L. Defrates* 88
BRINGING ELECTRICITY TO RURAL WESTERN ILLINOIS *Ralph Eaton* 90
DISEASE FREE SEED CORN *Robert Little* 93
A DAY'S WORK IN CORN PICKING TIME *Arthur Hawbaker* 94
A WOMAN'S WORK ON BUTCHERING DAY *Lucille Ballinger* 95
WINE-MAKING IN MONROE COUNTY *Al Hartman* 97

VI *The Values of Father and Mother* 99

THE VALUES OF MOTHER AND FATHER *Alfred J. Lindsey* 101
THE INSTRUMENT *Jeanne Berman* 103
POP *Bob Hulsen* 105
MY BELOVED PARENTS *Floyd M. Lowary* 107
THE CUT GLASS PITCHER *Evelyn Witter* 108
HATTIE HOWARD *Glenna Lamb* 109
A TIME TO REAP *Arvis Christian* 111
MOTHER: MY BLESSING *Norma Altum* 112
THE MAN WHO HAD NO VALUES *Shirley Lewis* 113
MOTHER WASN'T SUPERSTITIOUS . . . BUT *Betty Doubet* 116

VII *My Experience in High School* 119

MY EXPERIENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL *Alfred J. Lindsey* 121
PRAIRIE CITADELS *Dorothy M. Ross* 123

MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS *Katherine (Nola Thornton) Cravens* 125
HOME ECONOMICS AND THE SLOGAN *Lois I. Armstrong* 127
THE GATHERING OF THE NUTS *Lydia Jo Boston* 128
HIGH SCHOOL IN DIXON *Lillian Schick Peterson* 130
HIGH SCHOOL THE HARD WAY *Marie Freesmeyer* 132
MISTAKEN IDENTITY *Ivan E. Prall* 134
INNOCENCE LOST AT TAYLORVILLE HIGH *Martha Jean Wieland* 136
HIGH SCHOOL HERE I COME *Anthony L. Siemer* 138

VIII *Poetry* 141

POETRY John E. Hallwas 143
POETRY AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL *June Speer Chatterton* 145
MEMORIES OF MY HOME TOWN *Marie Ostrander Brooks* 146
MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD *Lorna G. Moore* 147
SUNDAY EVENING IN WINTER *Faye Christian Perry* 147
AUTUMN HAZE *Jack Iorio* 148
SCHOOLMARM *Bernice Lovekamp* 148
PAPA *Jessie Lynch* 149
THE EYES OF LOVE *Eleanor Schuett* 149
AN ODE TO THE NINETIES *Martha "Gramma" Elven* 150

IX *Neighbors* 151

NEIGHBORS *Alfred J. Lindsey* 153
ED HULTING, NEIGHBOR AND FRIEND *Margaret M. DeDecker* 155
THE OLD NEIGHBORS *Mary Lou Adams* 156
FARM NEIGHBORS *Florence Hesterberg* 157
A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS *Rosemary Rausch* 159
A SPECIAL FRIEND *Louise E. Efnor* 160
MEMORIES OF NEIGHBORS *Darlene Purdy* 162

A LESSON IN DIVERSITY *Phyllis T. Fenton* 163
CHINESE-AMERICAN NEIGHBORS IN CHICAGO *Bea Tholen* 164
WE LIVE AS NEIGHBORS *John J. Coyle* 166

X *Memories of Childhood and Youth* 169

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH *John E. Hallwas* 171
CAUGHT ON THE BRIDGE *Wanda Gardner* 173
THE STORM OF 1918 *Floy K. Chapman* 174
THE LESSON *Hugh McMenamin* 175
MY CAREER AS A BOOTLEGGER *Joe Mangieri* 177
PRAYER MEETING *Wilber Sauer* 179
PEACE AT LAST *Mildred Brooks* 181
GOING TO GRANDMA'S FOR CHRISTMAS *Dorothy G. Thompson* 182
THE FOURTH OF JULY IN MILLSTADT *Wilson M. Baltz* 184
WHEN "KID" GATTIS FOUGHT IN BUSHNELL *Warren Wilson* 185
HOWARD AND ME AND THE MODEL T *Russell Stump* 188
WORLD WAR II: THE HOME FRONT *Betty L. Hardwick* 189

List of Authors 193

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments

The Two Rivers Arts Council is indebted to many people and agencies that made contributions to this sixth volume in our widely known memoir collection series. Within the TRAC organization, Vice President Steve Larimer and board member Pam Johnson made wide-ranging contributions to the administration of the book project, and TRAC also appreciates the efforts of past directors Helen Thomson and Lynda Howard. Several board members helped with the memoir-writing contests that provided the material for the book: Jane Boyd, Kim Funk, Sharon Graham, Pam Johnson, Cathy Null, Jim O'Toole, and Carolyn Strong. Of course, TRAC also appreciates the work of editors John Hallwas and Alfred Lindsey who selected and edited the manuscripts and wrote the introductions. The production of the book was handled by the Curriculum Publications Clearinghouse at Western Illinois University, and special thanks are due to Tammy Carson, Sandy Larimer, and Pam Mainland of that agency. TRAC is also indebted to Archives and Special Collections at Western Illinois University Library, which supplied the photographs. Finally, we are especially and continually grateful to the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency that contributes to the well-being of the arts in Illinois.

Yvonne Knapp

Yvonne Knapp

President, Two Rivers Arts Council

1 People with a Lasting Influence

PEOPLE WITH A LASTING INFLUENCE

Everyone is influenced by a multitude of people—parents, siblings, teachers, friends, and others. One's sense of identity is, in fact, the product of social interaction. More than we realize, other people make us who we are.

Often, it takes years of experience and some earnest reflection to determine who led us in a productive direction or who taught us the values that have shaped our lives. Perhaps for that reason we often reach middle age before we sort out the influences that made a difference.

One of the great influences on me was a young professor at Western Illinois University who taught my first college literature course more than thirty years ago. It was focused on medieval and Renaissance classics like Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which are long and complicated works. The professor may or may not have been better informed than his colleagues, but he greatly enjoyed the books that we read together, and he provoked the class to enjoy them too. Better than any English teacher I had been exposed to, he knew that the purpose of reading great books was not more literary sophistication but more life, a deeper insight into ourselves and others. And he knew that the real focus of teaching was not the course content but the student's development, so he took the time to encourage his students, including me. As teachers often do, he became a role model. Later, he became a much-admired colleague and a friend as well. He was Alfred J. Lindsey, now retired, who co-edits the *Tales from Two Rivers* book series.

Several of the memoirs in this section focus on remarkable teachers. Among them is Martha K. Graham's "Mary L. Dixson of Stronghurst," which depicts the author's effort to comprehend the life of a former high school teacher. It is a fine narrative that deeply engages the reader as it provides insight into a talented, committed woman. Avis L. Hutchins' "Memories of Mrs. Brewer" is a tribute to a remarkable country school teacher who was not only caring and demanding but energetic and inventive as well. Zelda Hedden Sellman's "Learning To See" is about a down-to-earth college art teacher who recognized that painting was not essentially a matter of skill, but of perception. And Signa Lorimer's "My Poor Violin Teacher" dramatizes a moment of insight when the author learned how richly satisfying her impoverished music teacher's life really was.

Two of the memoirs depict the influence of family members. Eva Baker Watson's "A Legacy from My Mother" finds the foundation of her writing talent in her mother's imaginative storytelling, which is recreated in a vivid example. Like Martha K. Graham, Watson is one of the most talented writers who has appeared in the *Tales from Two Rivers* series over the years. James B. Jackson, also among the most talented *Tales* authors, pays tribute to his grandmother, a farm wife who used her wide-ranging interests to enrich the life of their grandson. Although Jackson does not mention it, he went on to become an educator who spent a lifetime influencing young people.

Of course, friends can have a lasting influence, too, as the memoirs by Truman W. Waite and Shirley Ballard demonstrate. The first recalls an older man whose good advice was matched by his own good example, and whose integrity and helpfulness made him an outstanding neighbor. The second depicts a young woman whose unselfish commitment to others and radiant spirituality made her "more than a friend." One of the most touching stories in this collection, it succeeds partly because of the sensitive self-portrayal of the author, who measured herself against a truly remarkable individual.

All of the memoirs in this section remind us to take time for the people in our lives, especially the young, for our influence is apt to extend much further than we recognize.

John E. Hallwas

MARY L. DIXSON OF STRONGHURST

Martha K. Graham

As older people seem to do, I find myself thinking often of my teachers, from first grade through college, who have made a difference in my life. One of them was Mary L. Dixson of Stronghurst, who came to Roseville to teach biology and music in 1925, when I was a high school sophomore.

Miss Dixson was a Knox College graduate, and Roseville High School was her first teaching position. When she left Roseville for a position in Rochelle, we kept in contact for several years, then lost track of each other.

One day, thinking of Miss Dixson, I decided to go to Stronghurst to see what I could discover about her and her life after our Roseville teacher-student relationship. In her home town, my husband and I first stopped at an agricultural office where the secretary referred us to a cousin of Mary's, who now lived in the nursing home. There, the cousin could give me little information other than that Mary's parents, George and Edith, had lived all their lives in Stronghurst, and that Mary had died a few years ago of cancer, and was buried in Stronghurst cemetery. She smiled as she said, "Mary was quite a girl."

Yes, Mary *was* "quite a girl." She had made a deep imprint on my life and the lives of many of my schoolmates.

My first sight of Mary Dixson was on the opening day of biology class. She was tall and very straight, rather large-boned, well-built, and strong looking. She was confident and forceful, but in a friendly way. She introduced us to biology with a poem:

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

I have never forgotten that poem, which Tennyson wrote. With Miss Dixson's explanation, somehow it integrated people and nature in a way that was new to me. Many of my adolescent thoughts, questions, and feelings seemed to fall into place. I liked my new teacher, and I knew I would like biology with a teacher like that.

I went to her music class. She wanted to teach the rudiments of music theory and harmony, music history, and appreciation. She said it wasn't enough to play instruments or to sing well. People needed to know how music was put together, how composers applied music's rules, and how and why they sometimes broke the rules, giving musicians new ideas. The new ideas resulted in the development and growth of music through the ages. That was a new and rather startling idea to me, and I wanted to know about it. In fact, Mary Dixson's biology and music classes interested me so much that in college I majored in biology, with music as a minor.

Miss Dixson gave voice lessons and I enrolled. After a year I had improved enough to place third in the Military Tract Music contest, held in Galesburg at Beecher Chapel, Knox College.

Mary Dixson was a whimsical, personally friendly teacher. Sometimes she called me "Martha Matilda." When I asked her why, she said, "It suits you. Certain names just seem to go with certain people. I guess my mother gave me such ideas. She named me Mary Leonora, and said that if I grew up plain and practical, Mary would fit me, and if I grew up to be kind of exotic, Leonora would be just right." They called her Mary.

Sometimes when she returned from vacation trips she brought back things she thought her students would like. From Michigan she brought me rolls of white birchbark. From somewhere else, a small light green vase just big enough for

violets. I kept it on my desk at college. From Virginia, a small photo of Mount Vernon. From Washington, DC, a framed photo of the cherry trees that Japan had given the U.S. and that had been planted along a waterway near the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials.

She had gone to Washington, DC as a page for a D.A.R. convention there. She felt it was an honor to be chosen, and her picture was taken on that occasion. It shows her to be a pleasant, intelligent, rather plain woman, who was smiling, but trying not to show a rather crooked front tooth. It is, indeed, the Mary Dixson I knew, and I treasure it.

Her dress is one that my mother once said made her look "just like a fashion plate." Her stature and easy, erect bearing gave her the ability to "wear clothes," which was her best cosmetic feature.

Biology and music were clearly her abiding interests, but she was always there for people, to help them if she could. One day in biology class we were to copy and label the parts of a grasshopper that she had drawn on the blackboard. Next day she confronted me with my drawing: "This doesn't look like the kind of work you would do—wrong spelling, very sketchy drawing. What was wrong? Did you not feel well? Couldn't you see the board? You must re-do it."

I took a seat closer to the board and went to work. She looked at my completed drawing and said, "I think you must be near-sighted." She called my mother, and we made an appointment with Frank Lee, our Roseville "eye doctor." I got my new glasses, which I didn't like but accepted because they opened up a new visual world for me. Now everything was so clear it was startling. The trees weren't feathery at all; every leaf was distinct. I had spent my freshman year straining to see the blackboard, and must have gotten some bad grades because of it. But no other teacher had noticed my problem.

During my senior year, needing money for college that next year, I worked for Mrs. Edna Pratt, who was ill, expecting a second child, and needed help with her young son, Morton. She wanted me to "live in," and gave me a nice room across the hall from two teachers who roomed there. One was Mary Dixson, who had suggested me for the job.

One afternoon a friend from my homemaking class was visiting me in my room to work on our homemaking projects. I remember complaining about having such a time-consuming assignment. My friend offered to do what she could to help. I must have refused her offer in what must have been a very self-pitying style, for from Mary's room across the hall came, "I'm crabbed. I *want* to be crabbed. Nobody can help me."

We were shocked into silence. My friend gave me a little wave and tiptoed down the stairs. I got to work in earnest on my project. Nothing was ever mentioned by Mary Dixson or by me about that episode. The lesson had been taught.

To return to my search for information concerning Mary Dixson, we went to the Stronghurst newspaper (the *Quill*) office, where they sent me to the woman who kept the cemetery records. She was very busy with her family, but brought out her heavy, ancient book and showed me the location of the Dixson plot. But Mary Dixson was not listed as having been buried there. The recorder felt somehow that the fault was hers, since such a record would have been noted during her term of office. She suggested that we follow her in her car to the cemetery where she would indicate the Dixson plot and return home.

There at the corner of the Dixson plot was a small gray marble gravestone for Mary Dixson, next to two similar stones for a sister and a brother who had died in infancy. She had told me about them.

I stood there trying silently to thank my teacher for the many ways in which she had helped me, and for the insights she had given me that had changed and enriched my life. She had been the very best kind of teacher because of her dedication to her work and because of the very real and freely expressed interest she had felt in her students.

Since we now knew the date of her death, August 19, 1985, it was easy to locate the obituary in the *Quill* office. It was very complete.

From her position at Rochelle, Miss Dixson had joined the staff of Benton Harbor, Michigan, High School in 1938 as a biology teacher. She was also Dean of Girls. She retired from the high school in 1967. She had an interesting and useful life in Benton Harbor, being very active in organizations.

The obituary also stated that Mary Dixson had donated her body to the University of Michigan Medical School. So that solved the mystery of the absence of her name in the Stronghurst Cemetery Record Book. She was not actually buried there.

How very like Mary Dixson that she would do exactly as she had done. She had made sure that someone would set the stone inscribed "Mary L. Dixson, April 7, 1902–August 19, 1985." She wanted that record of having lived, but she did not want to commit her body uselessly to the earth. Even in death, she had helped others—and had shown her commitment to the cause of science.

I realize now that the example of her life was the greatest lesson that I learned from Mary Dixson.

MEMORIES OF MRS. BREWER

Avis L. Hutchins

"Now tomorrow, students, I want you to wear your oldest shoes and, if possible, bring some old gloves with you," said the teacher with a mysterious smile as we headed home from school one autumn day. Well, we were simply bursting with curiosity as we rushed into our homes and told our mothers what the teacher had said. If our parents knew the secret, they weren't telling.

Next morning we arrived at school dressed as Mrs. Brewer had bid us do. But we weren't to learn the secret until the first recess. Then she assembled all of us in the yard north of the schoolhouse, among the numerous large old walnut trees. "I have a surprise for you," she smiled. "How would you like to have a new softball and bat and some new books for the library?" Would we! This was soon after the Depression, and schools and teachers were still operating on a shoestring. She went on, "Look at all these fat walnuts just waiting to be gathered. Arlo has made a big wooden platform for us to put them on and tromp their hulls off. That's why I've asked you to wear your oldest shoes today, so they wouldn't get so badly stained." Most of us kids had only one pair of shoes, anyway. Even though they might get badly worn, we sometimes had to wait awhile for another pair. She continued, "Let's use these buckets and baskets to gather the walnuts, then we will take turns tromping their hulls off."

Such laughing and scrambling about she probably had never seen before! The older boys were delighted to be allowed to climb high in the trees and shake the limbs to remove the last of the clinging nuts. The next classes were quickly postponed as we gathered every nut in the tall grass, poured them out onto the platform, and jumped on them with all our might. The brown juice squirted everywhere, not always accidentally, and our shoes, gloves, and hands were soon soaked with a stain which would last for weeks. "We'll let the nuts dry for a few days, and then we can put them out for sale. But first, we must make a big sign so people driving by will know we have them," she suggested. This was a project we older girls took to with enthusiasm, and the big white sign advertising "WALNUTS FOR SALE, $1.50 BUSHEL" was soon ready.

By the end of the week we all agreed the walnuts were ready to be sold, and we enthusiastically piled them into boxes after measuring them carefully and generously in a big wooden bushel basket. Monday morning we set them out by the fence,

along with our sign. Can you imagine doing that these days? The sign and nuts wouldn't be there for five minutes! Soon people were stopping, happy to buy nuts already hulled and ready to be cracked and picked out to make candy, or cookies, or cakes. The most memorable customers were from Ohio. Of course, it was quite an occasion to have "foreigners" pass by. This dear couple bought TWO bushels of nuts and insisted on paying $2.50 for each bushel. But the most wonderful thing happened about two weeks later. One day a large brown package was delivered by Mr. Crookham, the rural mail carrier. Mrs. Brewer could hardly open the box quickly enough to satisfy our curiosity. That sweet and thoughtful old couple from Ohio had sent a box full of penny candy, balloons, and other small inexpensive items. You would have thought we had received manna from heaven! There were enough goodies for all twenty-five of us, with enough left over to take home to younger sisters and brothers. What a time we did have! We all signed the thank-you letter we were encouraged to write. And the sturdy new bat and ball and wonderful books were enjoyed even more because WE had earned the money for them.

This is just one memorable example of the subtle nurturing of our teacher. Mrs. Brewer always seemed to be bubbling over with enthusiasm and new ideas which would help us want to learn. Such patience she had! Her bright eyes could sparkle with love, or flash with indignation when the boisterous older boys did some unkind thing to the younger children or failed to have their lessons ready. Her smile would crinkle the corners of her eyes and encourage us, or it could be a stern warning to "straighten up and act right." As we all were in one room, every class seemed to learn something from the others. Her discipline was always fair, and we soon learned that we "got what we deserved," whether we were the school board president's son, or the shy kid from the new neighborhood hired-hand's family. We truly wondered if she had eyes in the back of her head as our mothers did! And when it came to discipline, we could not understand why our parents always sided with Mrs. Brewer, instead of accepting our biased versions. We now know that it was not authority alone prevailing, but truth and honesty as well.

Mrs. Brewer quickly realized that our assorted metal lunch pails often contained meager lunches. She organized what may have been one of the first "hot lunches" in the county. Providing a large kettle from her kitchen and a chunk of meat, she encouraged us to bring fresh or homecanned vegetables to add to the pot when we first arrived at school in the morning. Set on the back of the fat, round furnace, the pot bubbled along, and when noon-time came and our tummies were growling alarmingly, a delicious soup was ready to be shared and eaten with our dry sandwiches. Oh, how good it tasted, especially on a crisp fall day, or during a snowy winter's day, or on a rainy spring day. We found it was a good feeling to share and to care about one another, no matter how little or how much we had to offer.

Just over the fence, in Cunningham's pasture, by the huge old soft maple tree which was such daring fun to climb up and slide down, was a great area just perfect for ice skating. It was low and may have been a buffalo-wallow at some early time in our history, but we only knew that the water collected there and froze, just for us. Of course, no one had ice skates, but that didn't stop us, even though our parents admonished us daily not to wear out our shoes. Every winter's recess saw us out there, falling and sliding, and sliding and falling.

How Mrs. Brewer found the time, and the energy, to play with us and get all her classroom work done, I can't imagine. We played fox-and-geese, and she showed us how to make "snow angels" by flopping backwards in the new-fallen snow. We played "andy-over" the high peaked roof of our schoolhouse. In rainy weather, or on bitterly cold days, she would stoke the huge coal furnace a little more, then we would play games, or have a spelling bee, or sing, or she would read to us. In nice weather,

which meant any day it was not raining or snowing, there was always a ball game for the boys at recess, while the girls would sit behind the big walnut trees and share secrets with our current best friends, or copy assignments. Everyone climbed those trees like the monkeys we were, and Mrs. Brewer was the zoo-keeper.

Her bespectacled, roly-poly husband, Arlo, helped with her many projects. He would start the fire in the old furnace, carry in coal and water, and do anything else he could to make her job easier. I shudder to think how small her salary was in those post-Depression days, and of everything she did to earn it, simply because it was a job she seemed to love.

Mrs. Brewer was my teacher for the last three years of country grade school, and as I was the only pupil in my class, I must admit to receiving lots of individual attention. We became good friends, and I probably deserved the title of "teacher's pet," which I was called many times.

At the end of my eighth year, Mrs. Brewer drilled me relentlessly on everything she thought I should know before I took the Eighth Grade Exam at Monmouth, the county seat. The exam was administered by the county school superintendent, and anyone who has taken that exam knows what fear and trepidation really mean. I'm not sure who had the broadest smile, my beloved teacher or me, when the grades were returned. But I think she would have beamed just as brightly on any of us, just as long as we had done our best. And that's all she ever asked. What a wonderful legacy she left us.

LEARNING TO SEE

Zelda Hedden Sellman

For me, entering college as an art major was an almost reckless decision. Art instruction was not offered in Fulton County schools, and I left Farmington High School prepared in English and Latin.

My first studio class at Normal was taught by Mary Parker. I remember the sinking feeling in my stomach as I sat directly in front of her. What if I couldn't draw a straight line?

"I never lecture because I like to hear your ideas," Mrs. Parker said. "Teaching is an exchange of thoughts. Art is learning to see."

She was short and plump, with dark chestnut hair combed in a bun to expose her high forehead and classic features. "In nature, design is the plan. And, by the way, there is no such thing as a straight line—or pure black—in nature. Rhythm in design leads our eye from one area to another." She illustrated her thoughts with roughly drawn sketches. "See? This can be achieved by continuous lines or by repetition." Suddenly she began singing in a lyrical voice, "Glow, little glow-worm, glim-mer, glim-mer," and she remarked, "Rhythm is easily apparent in music. Well, we can create the same effect visually." She spoke of the heartbeat, the patterns of the universe, the moon and tides. "See the organization in the petals of a flower, in the veins of a leaf. Rhythm is organization."

Because of Mrs. Parker's informality, I lost my fear of the unknown; and because of her enthusiasm, I became suddenly aware of colors, their varied tints and shades, of shapes, contrasts, light, and shadow. "Did you ever hug a tree?" she asked, long before the coming of modern environmentalists. "Feel the texture of the bark. Would you recognize the type of tree if you were blindfolded?"

I registered for "Beginning Watercolor" with Mrs. Parker the next semester, and one day after class she said, "How would

you like to work for me? I have a garden that needs to be weeded. If you work a few hours now and then, I could feed you at night."

Her blue-green house was a two-story clapboard, which was built in the 1890s and fringed with gingerbread. The small porch, a mere cubicle, provided a fluted roof like an upside down morning glory over the front door. In the living room she had cut roses from wallpaper and pasted them trellis fashion crawling up one wall and encircling the light fixture in the ceiling.

I pulled ragweed in the warm afternoons, and when I tore up a strawberry plant by mistake, I stuck it back in the dirt and tried to camouflage the error. Mrs. Parker never mentioned the brown shriveled leaves. She did insist that I watch her taffy-colored cocker spaniel perform on command, begging and speaking with a single shrill yap, and then rolling over and placing her nose between her paws for prayers. The dog also dutifully hopped in a circle on its hind legs and then, panting, dashed into the bathroom. "Go in and see her other trick. She drinks from the toilet bowl!"

At times I not only admired, but envied, Mrs. Parker's down-to-earth and carefree spirit. She played *Carmen* in the faculty show. The night of the big production, she blacked out two teeth and, biting a rose, brought the house down with her stomping feet and swirling skirt in a real flamenco dance.

Most of all I enjoyed painting on class field trips, especially when she took us to a cabin at Lake Bloomington. I gained not only a new way of looking at things, but an inner perspective. Sitting on the dock, Mrs. Parker identified yellow, orange, and lavender in seemingly colorless driftwood. "And look at the soft coral shades in that mackerel sky. Isn't it splendid? I hope, I do hope that I may see another sunset just like this one."

The remark seemed eerie and I was reminded, at eighteen, of my mortality. "Every sunset is different," she continued. "And we never know how many we're allotted. Did you ever think about it? Every sunset is a miracle, and yet we fail to notice it unless the sky is flaming, blazing. Anyway, this one is especially lovely, so gentle and muted and harmonious. I should like to experience this one again."

Many years later I still hear the rhythmic water lap the shore and see art in all of nature. Mary Parker, my first art teacher, gave me a new vision, glasses to last a lifetime.

MY POOR VIOLIN TEACHER

Signa Lorimer

She walked down the main street of the little mid-western town with a masculine stride, the shabby violin case swinging rhythmically from her strong arm. Her clothes were plain and outmoded, but the violin case looked like a badge of courage with which to face the world.

Lucy Exner was my violin teacher during my high school years, but only from the vantage point of later years have I discovered that what she taught me most about music were qualities what were intangible—the love of pure tone, absolute faithfulness to the composer's idea, and correct intonation.

"Signa," she would say, "don't worry about speed and technique. That will take care of itself. Get good tone. That's all that matters." And I, who had thought that a fast and tricky violin piece was the summum bonum, gradually came to see the value of having an idea worth expressing in as pure a tone as possible. Her highest commendation at lesson time would be, "Well, you didn't do so bad" or "you did pretty good."

Miss Exner lived on a small farm just outside the town of Princeton, and she eked out a living from the soil, growing her own garden and raising a small flock of chickens. She cared for her older sister, who seemed ageless, as indeed did Miss Exner. Her house was badly in need of paint. When she was younger, she used to make violins to sell; and she had always repaired

violins. But the town she lived in was small and her pupils were few. When a new and more up-to-date violin teacher moved into town, most of Miss Exner's pupils deserted her. After all, it is hard to resist glamour, and Miss Exner did not have glamour.

During my college years I decided to have my violin looked over. It hadn't been repaired for many years. When I knocked on Miss Exner's door, which needed a new screen, she welcomed me heartily and told me to come in. The room I entered was bare—no rug on the floor, no curtains in the window, but scrupulously clean. In one corner of the huge room was a porch couch, made of wooden slats, in another corner a plain chair. On one side was a large cupboard, made of poor wood. In the middle of the room was a table on which reposed the violin, hers, swathed in a silk cloth and lying in the shabby old case. Opposite the table was a wooden violin rack, which Miss Exner had made herself. That was all of the furniture in that room. The surrounding rooms were equally bare. Tears came to my eyes when I saw such abject poverty surrounding my old violin teacher. How could she who had inspired others find inspiration in these bleak surroundings? (The answer, I'm sure now, is that she had the soul of an artist.)

I found out that her home was without electrical power. "You see," she said, "we don't have electricity in the house. I had a battery radio once, but it didn't work right."

By then, Miss Exner was talking spiritedly. I had never heard her speak so volubly. She was appreciative of my regard for her as a teacher. "There could be no better violin teacher," I had told her. And I sincerely meant it.

"That's what my teacher in Chicago told me once, Signa," she said. "I always wanted to be a concert artist, but he told me, 'You must teach. You are perfect and you must teach.'" This was not bragging. I knew what she meant by that word "perfect." Her intonation on the violin was perfect. There was no carelessness or slovenliness in her playing.

She handled my violin as if it were priceless, her work-worn hands skillfully turning it this way and that. "Signa," she finally said, "sometimes when I feel like being a child again I ask the Lord to send me a fiddle to repair. He always answers my prayer and sends me one, and then I am perfectly happy. But you have to have faith. You must have faith and then the Lord always helps you. I have everything I want, Signa. I've always had everything I want."

As she grasped my hand and said good-bye, suddenly the thought came to me that I must not feel sorry for her. Rather, I should feel sorry for myself and others who are so dependent upon *things* that we are poor in spirit, much poorer than Miss Exner was poor in things.

A LEGACY FROM MY MOTHER

Eva Baker Watson

Mama was a storyteller.

The Bible, with its guidelines, its colorful figures, its fascinating stories, has lived in my mind because of my mother's paraphrasing when I was a child. It's not that she never quoted to us, verbatim, the beautiful King James version. She did, often and repetitiously. But it was her recounting those old scenarios and philosophies in our comfortable Pope County vernacular that imprinted them on my consciousness indelibly, so that time and trouble—and eventual, inevitable questionings—have not erased them.

Sometimes then (probably most of the time) I failed to prepare my Sunday School lesson. So, as we rode along to services, Mama would briefly summarize the Bible text for the benefit of the whole family. This I recall much more vividly than

all the pulpit expoundings I ever heard. (I should have remembered to thank her for that, but I'm too late, too late.)

Storytelling was a natural for Mama. Our home was a farm near the remote country village of Brownfield. That was long before the advent of communication and entertainment wonders that thrill and threaten us today. A party line telephone hanging on the wall, the daily *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, and the Illinois Central Railroad that brought it and our mail, were all that kept our little community in southernmost Illinois in touch with the outside world. As Mama worked, going about doing the household chores, she would tell us about our neighbors, and our kin, and the intrigue that interlaced the soap opera that went on around us then—and that had gone on around before my time. Her way of telling lifted those tales a step above the crassness of gossip.

My mother knew how to live fully within the limits of our circumstances. She was interested in the people about whom she told us; therefore, she captured our interest in their stories. Genuine interest is contagious. Her technique in telling those stories was not lost on the fertile ground of my mind—the child's mind that already was beginning to feel the urge to compose, to write.

I remember a neat-looking blind man who passed our house every Sunday morning, jolting his way to church in the farm wagon, along with his brother's family with whom he lived. Mama told us about the hunting accident that had taken his sight when he was a boy of thirteen. And she told of the touching scene after the tragedy where he had consoled his grieving mother, saying, "Aw Mom—it's not so bad!" She told of the compensating factors in his life, how useful he was to his brother, expertly cooking and doing housework and how—on his own—he had learned Braille. Because of Mama's stories he became an appealing and inspiring figure to me as I observed him lead his quiet, monkish, but worthwhile existence.

She explained to us the bleak background of a music-loving farmer, a seemingly uncouth man, who lived at the top of a hill just north of us. Often in the evening after supper we could hear the oom-pahs of a German polka as he led the brass band comprised of his large family of children. As the strains of music wafted out over the community, a softer, more sensitive, and admirable side of this man was revealed. His very different-ness triggered my imagination as Mama told us about him.

Mama sometimes made us shiver with her accounts of her own brushes with ESP, although she didn't call it that. She called it "mental telepathy," or just "a feeling that something was going to happen." She proved it dramatically when one night she dreamed of the drowning of an uncle of mine. Within hours word came that he had actually drowned.

We heard the romantic story of how Mama's young schoolteacher mother, as a bride-to-be, had watched from a discreetly distant ridge while, in the valley below, her fiancee was building the house that was to be their home. No closer than that could my very proper grandmother go—not until after the sanctioning marriage rites had been performed.

Summer days were filled with hard work on the farm, and at long day's end there was no air-conditioned house to relax in. So, after supper, the family would sit on the front porch to catch the evening breeze and watch darkness fall. Mama and Papa sat in the swing and we children lounged on the steps to listen to "The Frog Concert," narrated by Mama.

The pond in the pasture down in front of the house was the stage. Lighting effects were supplied by a million fireflies, and the black sky twinkling with stars was the backdrop.

Orchestral accompaniment for the comic operetta was furnished by katydids and dry weather flies. The frogs sang in a wide range of voices. Lyrics were, of course, in frog language, but Mama interpreted the fantasy for us:

The old Bullfrog was giving a party on the far bank of the pond. In his Basso Profundo, he boomed a spirited invitation: "JUG-O'-RUM!"

His subjects on the banks all around sang responses, one at a time.

The First Tenors were afraid of water, so in their high voices they complained, "It's-knee-deep! Knee-deep!"

The overcautious Baritones sang a worse warning, "It's-over-your-head!" Then they added a safe proposal, "Better-go-'round! Better-go-'round!"

Second Tenors, fearful of missing the fun, were resourceful. "Bring-over-your-boat," they sang. "Bring-over-your-boat!"

The Chorus croaked a discouraging, "Boat's-sprung-a leak! Boat's-sprung-a leak!"

In the finale, the entire cast joined in a crescendo filling the night air, while underneath it all the Bullfrog continued his rumbled enticement: "Jug-o'-rum, Jug-O'-Rum, JUG-O'-RUM-M-M-M!"

Every night they sang throughout the summer and, because of Mama's imagination and storytelling, they weren't just frog noises, but a drama with actual words and a theme.

Any success I've had with my hobby of writing is a gift from my mother. Unwittingly, and from the closeness she felt for her children and those living around her—plus her own creativity and need for self-expression—she left to me this legacy. It has inspired me, thrilled me, and been my "escape hatch" in troubled times. For this most fulfilling avocation, I thank her.

REMARKABLE KITTIE SIMMONS

James B. Jackson

I left home for a year when I was six. Mother had tuberculosis. Complete rest was the only treatment known, and there was no sanatorium available. My older brother and I went to our maternal grandparents. My other brother, Bluford, went to Grandma Jackson. It was a terrible disruption, but none of us suffered any permanent damage and perhaps we all gained strength.

Grandpa and Grandma Simmons lived in the ancestral home with Uncle Will, Aunt Maggie, and their three children, all several years older than me. They made a pet of me and I was surrounded with love. It was more than twenty-five years before I realized that there were people who disliked me!

My grandmother, Kittie Simmons, was a tiny woman, perhaps five feet tall. Her hair was graying and she wore it pulled back into a bun. That, with her steel-rimmed glasses, gave her a misleading look of severity. Her skills were many and she was well-organized, but most importantly, she was kind, loving, and courageous. I bonded to her as to a second mother.

Grandma filled many roles. She shared some household duties with Aunt Maggie, but she ran the kitchen garden; planned and oversaw the enormous truck-patch; and took care of the chickens, hundreds of them. In addition, she took care of everything inside the house, even to bringing in the kindling and the wood. She let me carry out the ashes. When I spilled a bucket full of eggs, there was a quick hand to comfort and to dry the tears. I learned to weed the tiny seedlings in the garden and was never scolded when one or two were pulled up with the weeds.

That big pocket knife of hers was an "Easy Opener." It rode in her huge apron pocket secured by a length of stout cord. It was sharp enough for use as a surgical scalpel. She used it to

prune plants, clean fish, put a sharp point on a bean pole, or dig a wild flower. Her bird glasses rested on the shelf with the bird book, but when we went beyond the chicken yard, both of them went in her apron pocket. She knew all the birds, even the migrant warblers. Within the year, I knew all the common birds on sight or by their call. Years later, I earned an "A" in Roy Sallee's ornithology class at Western Illinois State Teacher's College with the help of this early knowledge.

Our favorite retreat was the woods on the other side of the farm. We had to drive the buggy to get there. We always came home loaded down. The woods were full of wonders like morel mushrooms and maidenhair ferns. We also found bluebells and Dutchman's britches. And there were arrowheads and geodes and curious pieces of weathered wood. I met my first horned owl there and my first redstart. We watched the fox cubs play. Wild blackberries, raspberries, plums, and hickory nuts—all were there for the taking. We looked at the stones in the brook and at the stones in the tiny country cemetery, where a dozen early settlers were buried before the Civil War.

Grandma's room was my delight. Originally it was the "great parlor" in the southern style house. There was a bed for each of the grandparents, one for me, several chairs, a heating stove, and a large wardrobe or armoire. I loved to lie on the sheepskin rug by the stove and listen to her fairy tales or stories of early times.

Sometimes I watched silently as she sketched or painted. She painted lovely birthday cards in water color. The one I received on my tenth birthday is still in the original envelope. Grandma was a fine artist, who held her own show at the Chicago Art Institute when she was forty years old. She had been a teacher in Princeton, Illinois, before she married Grandpa a few years after he came home from the Civil War.

After Grandpa died in the spring and Mother had regained her health, I returned home to the new farm Dad had bought a couple of miles from Grandma's. Then she could drive Pet over in a few minutes. She came often, usually for several days. She helped Mother with the housework, the washing, and the gardening. Once in a while she and I would slip away to fish in the creek or to the woods for flowers or bird watching. Once we caught a large soft-shelled turtle, and I learned about turtle soup.

One day, as she came down the narrow stairs, she brushed against a bumble bee which stung her on the thigh. She knew her allergy to the sting would incapacitate her for a week. To me her next act was truly heroic. She whipped out her "Easy Opener" and cut out the area containing the venom. It was done in an instant. After she dressed it, she went about her work as if nothing had happened.

My whole life has been influenced by my close and loving association with this unusual woman, Kittie Brady Simmons. My attitudes and my sense of values come largely from her. My whole spiritual outlook was shaped by her. I stayed close to her as long as she lived, and when she died, I helped to bury her.

EVERYBODY CALLED HIM "FRIDAY"

Truman W. Waite

Fred Miller was born on January 1, 1872, in a small log cabin in the vicinity where he spent all his life. His parents were Henry and Louisa Miller. His father was an immigrant from Germany who had settled near Bear Creek in western Illinois, where he operated a saw mill and sawed lumber from the native timber that was abundant there. At an early age, Fred helped in the timber and with the mill.

Henry Miller passed away when Fred was twelve years old, and soon afterward fire destroyed their home. So, Fred spent much of his early life working, especially helping a Civil

War veteran make charcoal near their home. The veteran's name was McClain, but he went by the name of "Friday," and after working with Friday for several months, Fred's family and friends called him Friday also. He was known by that nickname until his death when he was seventy-six years old.

I first recall meeting Friday (I never called him Fred) when I was four years old. My father took me with him when he made a trip to buy the farm where I grew up and on which I now reside. Friday lived close by, and being a friend, my father went to see him. He lived with his mother a short distance away. At that time I was too young to realize what was in my future and what an influence Friday would have on my life.

Friday didn't marry until after the death of his mother. He was a neighbor and friend to everyone in the community, and he especially liked all the children. We were his nearest neighbors, and I sometimes accompanied him when he went to work in the nearby woods, cutting saw logs and firewood. He taught me how to tell the names of the trees and showed me how to fell the trees in such a way that I would not get injured.

Friday lived adjacent to the school yard, and one day he smelled smoke. Upon searching for the location, he found it coming from the boys' outdoor toilet. Curious to know the source of the smoke, he opened the door and found some of my school mates and myself experimenting with some corn silks and hay chaff (marijuana was many years in the future). Friday, once a boy himself, knew what would happen if he informed the teacher or our parents, although he gave us the impression that was what he was going to do. When he left, he told us that if the good Lord wanted us to smoke, we would have had a flue on us when we were born.

Friday never informed the teacher or my parents. However, that was my first and last experience with smoking, for I knew that eventually my parents would have suspected what I was doing, and I was well aware of what would have happened. As I grew up, although Friday was thirty years older, we became close friends. Friday had a dry sense of humor and was quite a philosopher, living day by day and taking everything favorable or unfavorable with calmness and composure.

Later in my life he encouraged me. I was married then and had started farming, and the Great Depression was with us. Farm prices declined and money was practically nonexistent, and with the arrival of our children, the future was not too encouraging. At that time Friday provided good advice. He told me that I was still a young man and as long as I was able to work and secure three good meals a day for me and my family, and then go to bed and enjoy a good night's sleep, I was a rich man. Also, during that time, farms were being foreclosed, and people in bankruptcy were quite common. Friday told me many times never to go bankrupt, and to pay my honest debts if and when I could.

He illustrated that point by telling of a businessman that he knew in a nearby town, who had the misfortune of being heavily in debt, but rather than taking bankruptcy, he had an auction and sold everything he had to satisfy his creditors. After he had done so, he asked if there was anyone else present that he owed. He was surprised when a man in the crowd spoke up and said he still owed him for a long-standing debt. After thinking a moment, he admitted the man was right and he wished to pay him. He then drew from his pocket his watch, the last thing of value that he owned, and told the auctioneer to sell it and pay the man. After the sale was over, a group of businessmen, seeing what an honest man he was, financed him again in business. The man succeeded, and when he died he was one of the wealthiest men in the community.

I have always recalled that story and regarded Friday's advice as very good. It was a memorable day for me when the drought years and the Depression were over, and I was able to meet all my past financial obligations.

Friday himself never accumulated much wealth, but he really enjoyed having his health and being able to work, and he

cherished the fact that he was always ready and willing to help his neighbors—and always able to pay his creditors.

Friday passed away many years ago. Few people today remember him, but those who do also must have respected and admired Friday for his philosophy and good advice. In my life he was a helpful neighbor, a true friend, and a lasting memory.

MORE THAN A FRIEND

Shirley Ballard

Sister Teresa was not always called "Sister." She and I were roommates at St. Francis. We were starting our first year as novices.

I remember the first time I saw her. She was such a tiny girl, weighing only ninety-eight pounds; standing only five feet, two inches tall; and having the biggest blue eyes I've ever seen. Her smile lit up her face and seemed to radiate a glow of beauty as she stepped into the tiny bare room that we were going to share and said, "Hello, I'm Teresa."

Even in the beginning she would rise at four-thirty every morning and go to mass. Sister Clara never had to call more than once, while I always had to be reminded the second time.

The days were hard and long, sometimes starting after breakfast at six and continuing until eight or nine at night. I would sometimes complain and resent all of the work, but not Sister Teresa. Never did an angry word cross her lips. At times, I resented her because she seemed to adjust to the life at St. Francis and I couldn't.

I remember the time she found twenty dollars and quickly took it to Mother Superior's office. Twenty dollars was a lot of money in those days. I knew she could have used the money for new shoes, but she never gave it a thought.

One day I was ill, and I couldn't seem to get my floors scrubbed fast enough. Teresa just happened to finish her scrubbing and, without a word, she quietly got down on her knees and helped me finish.

As we walked back to our room each evening, we would pass the infirmary. This was where the sick and aged nuns were kept while they were recovering or dying. Sister Teresa would stop and chat with each and every nun, giving them a cheery smile and a kind word before we finally reached our destination.

Whenever I would get in trouble with Mother Superior, Sister Teresa would be right by my side, interceding for me. It never seemed to fail that Mother Superior was always more gentle with me when Sister Teresa was around. I think she was charmed by her, just like everyone else.

Even when I decided to leave St. Francis, she was at my side, encouraging me to be myself. She told me that the Lord would be with me, and that her prayers went with me, always.

I didn't realize how very good she was until years later. I received a letter telling me to come to St. Francis Infirmary as soon as possible. Sister Teresa was dying. I hadn't seen her since she had taken her vows ten years earlier. We had exchanged a few postcards, but I had never really gotten to see her. I had tried three times, but each time she was at a retreat and couldn't see anyone.

The long walk to the infirmary seemed endless, but finally I reached the small bed at the end of the room. There lay Sister Teresa. Her eyes were still big and blue, but her frail body was wasted away with cancer. As she held my hand and smiled, I remembered the happy days gone by. We talked about the things we had done as novices. Even though I could see she was getting tired, she never said so, or gave a thought to herself; she just wanted to please me. Then I realized that this beautiful person was everything I had always wanted to be. She was always kind and considerate. Her honesty was beyond reproach. Never in all the time I knew her did she ever do

anything that was selfish. And her strength, even at the end, seemed to be sufficient. Not a whimper of complaint reached my ears.

As I was about to leave, Sister Teresa said, "Will you be okay, Shirley?" I couldn't help it; tears ran down my face, and I began to shake. Once again Sister Teresa held my hand, and we prayed.

I'll never forget Sister Teresa. Her loyalty, honesty, compassion, kindness, and love of God will always give her a very special place in my heart. More than a friend, she was an inspiration.

II Childhood Fun

CHILDHOOD FUN

Play is said to be a child's work, but such a claim might very well be tempered with the observation that work should also be play for the youths. The joy of play and the satisfaction of work that teaches responsibility were well-understood by parents and grandparents who were products of the Great Depression. The recollections in this section support these claims. First, there was work; then, there was play—and much inexpensive, creative, exercise-oriented joy.

To parents of the present era and their children, too often addicted to television, electronic games, and expensive toys—all too often baby-sitting devices—it must be both perplexing and informing that their forbears had more joy with simple games, activities, and toys than they are having. In one of the memoirs, a granddaughter lamented, "There is nothing to do." Another grandmother was asked, "When you were young, you didn't have television or even radio; weren't you bored?"

The memoirs answer. No, they were not bored; there was much to do in their work and play.

Simple games provided unforgettable experiences. Bonnie Lee Berry recalls jacks, tag, and treasure hunt, while Marie Freesmeyer remembers tic-tac-toe and paper games. Other writers included drop the handkerchief, softball, ring around the rosy, andy-over, hide and seek, marbles, hoops, may I?, and other games.

Other writers of the recollections recalled activities. Margaret Artman enjoyed nature and shared the delightful experience of learning much about human nature in trying to build a clubhouse; and Helen Rilling spoke fondly of romping on bridges and of pony racing. Glenna Lamb told of an unforgettable snowball war in which the youth learned much. Fishing won the heart of Ida Dunsing, and Florence Ourth shared the thrill of skating on the Mississippi. Helen Harless found abiding pleasure in her playhouse; her swimming-fishing hole; and her pony, kites, and picnics. Mavis Alexander wrote a wonderfully amusing memoir about her experience wading in a pig sty, and she recalled, as did others, the joy in hearing stories. Reading, too, was mentioned; and Katherine Cravens recalled the fun she enjoyed in snow forts, volleyball, and swings. A huge event, according to several writers, was the trip to town on Saturday evenings.

After the chores, after the work, the fun started and continued. These authors were, in some ways, very fortunate indeed. In those days of grinding poverty and social turmoil, families stayed together, living in close proximity, with mothers staying at home. Poor economic times joined solid consensus values in binding families with hoops of steel. Sons and daughters were blessed with a sense of family and belonging. The educative forces of the mass media, the peer group, social stratification, and other critical changes had not yet exacted their disastrous influences. In spite of the poverty, it was a good time to be children as work and fun combined, joining other positive influences to prepare them for citizenship and happiness in a manner that parents of the present time might well choose to emulate.

"Mom and Dad," the lad watching a replay of a Walton family episode on television asks, "when will the Depression come so that we can have the fun that they are having?"

Alfred J. Lindsey

ANOTHER WORLD

Bonnie Lee Berry

My pre-teen granddaughter Adrienne and her cousin Amy walked to the couch, shoulders slouching, and plopped down with a groan and a sigh, "Grandma, there's nothing to do!" How many times do we hear this lament today?

I couldn't resist saying, "Well, I can tell you some of the things I did when I was your age." I got the usual response—eyes rolling back, mouths drooping, and voices groaning.

I recalled how it felt to have a new pair of three-dollar steel roller skates—to slip the clamps over the sole of my shoe, tighten them with the shiny metal key that hung from my neck by a string, fasten the sheepskin padded strap across the top of my foot; and stand, feeling the concrete vibrate under the steel, ball-bearing wheels. What a thrill! I spent hours and days learning to jump curbs and sidewalk cracks, to stride into the wind and coast downhill, and how to brake and turn around. Many of our physical activities in the 1930s were seasonal, and it seemed the whole neighborhood was skating. The boys would form teams and play street hockey with sticks and empty tin cans. There were few girls who wanted to join in with the boys for these rougher sports.

In this time, every little girl owned a drawstring bag containing jacks and a small sponge ball. Usually twelve jacks were used in a game. The players would seat themselves Indian-style, facing one another, and the girl chosen as the starter would scatter the twelve jacks on the floor in the center. She would then toss the ball about two feet into the air, allowing it to bounce once and, before catching it, scoop up one jack at a time until all twelve were picked up. If you didn't "miss," then two at a time were picked up, then three, and finally twelve—as well as catching the ball with the same hand! If you missed, you had to start all over again. Jacks required skill, and the competition was always there. By the time the jack season was over, we players had calluses on the sides of our "scooping" hand.

Every girl possessed a jump rope made of cotton clothesline(s). For individual jumping, the rope was cut long enough to wrap a couple times around each hand for holding and long enough to easily clear the girl's head when turning. Wrapping and judging the rope's length came with experience. Each girl jumped to rhymes such as "Johnny on the ocean, Johnny on the sea, Johnny stole a six-pence and gave it to me," reciting them over and over with many verses until she missed. The rhyme could indicate whether the jumper turned the rope forward or backward, and at the words, "Red Hot Pepper," the rope was turned as fast as could be while the jumper kept pace. All the while, others counted and kept score to see which girl could jump for the longest time.

Sometimes a longer rope was used turned by two girls, one at each end, and the jumper had to "get in" while the rope was turning and jump to rhymed instructions:

Old lady, old lady, turn around,
Old lady, old lady, touch the ground
Old lady, old lady, touch your shoe,
Old lady, old lady, twenty-three skidoo

We jumped Double Dutch when two ropes were turned simultaneously in opposite directions. The jumper then had to "get in" between two turning ropes and get out without missing. To miss meant that she took your turn turning the rope. We played Higher and Higher, in which the rope holders would start by placing the rope on the ground—then lifting it higher and higher to see how high the jumper could jump.

In our box of playthings was a marvelous fifteen cent sponge ball about the size of an orange. My friends and I would take turns throwing the ball against the porch steps and having it bounce back high in the air to catch and throw again and

again. Throwing it against a two-story house and having it bounce high in the air was fun, too.

Every block had its yo-yo champions, and tournaments were part of our summer playground activities.

In the daytime hours in summer we played treasure hunt. We would choose sides, hide an object, and direct the hunters with statements such as, "You're cold—cold—colder," meaning they were off course and "You're hot—hot—hotter" until shouts of victory were heard.

We also played tag and guessing games. We organized "safaris" in many of the vacant lots where grasses and caster bean plants towered over our heads, and, like Tarzan, we explored the jungle and threw reed spears at imaginary animals and enemies.

My friends and I would walk in a group to the neighborhood movie and see two full-length features, a short comedy, and cartoons for a nickel or dime. I loved the movies and fantasy they wrought. Tap-dancer Ruby Keeler and the Busby Berkeley musicals were the rage then. On the screen, we saw hundreds of gorgeously costumed dancers who did routines on fantastic stages of gigantic wedding cakes, carousels, waterfalls—the works.

Some of my friends and I took tap lessons. One day we were inspired to put our own show on. We rehearsed dance routines and learned a few songs such as "Looky Looky, Here Comes Cooky" and "Ain't She Sweet?" We printed our own tickets and sold them on our block for two cents each. Our smaller brothers and sisters were talked into selling lemonade and homemade cookies. My girlfriend's mother made us fantastic costumes of crepe paper and graciously donated her backyard for our production. Our mothers and a few others attended and we made enough on the deal to treat ourselves to a big banana split at the corner confectionery!

We cooled off on hot summer afternoons laying under and running through spray from the garden hose or dunking ourselves in filled washtubs. And on rainy days, a few of us from the neighborhood would gather in our old, dark, unfinished basement to make fudge and tell ghost stories. We constructed spaceships of overturned chairs, tables, and old covers. We drew pictures, colored them, and made paper dolls. On summer nights we played hide-and-seek games under the street lamp called Fly, Sheepie, Fly and we also played King of the Mountain. We would lie back on the cool, damp grass and marvel at the show of stars overhead. These were the games and activities of us city kids. Winter evenings were spent in the living room around the radio while Mom read or mended, Dad dozed or read the paper, and we did our homework. It was quiet and peaceful.

I remember many things about my childhood and I don't recall ever being bored! It was truly another world.

HOMESPUN FUN

Marie Freesmeyer

"Grandma, when you were young you didn't have television or even radio; weren't you bored?"

This puzzling question was asked by more than one of my grandchildren. I'm sure that most youths of today wonder how we survived back in what they call the "horse-and-buggy days," without the mechanical entertainment they now have.

My standard reply to the above question has been, "We didn't have much spare time in which to be bored; besides, we never used the word or felt the loss of something to do if we had some time to do as we pleased. In those days we had so many chores to be done that we had little time left for entertainment.

By this lengthy reply, I did not mean that the youths in the early part of the century had no fun. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" was an axiom often quoted by my father.

We had fun—lots of fun—but we found it in common places and things. I call it a homespun variety.

During the seven-month school terms, I and most of my peers spent the hours from eight in the morning until five in the evening walking to, attending, and returning from school. After that, there were many chores to be done: cows to bring in from the pasture, chickens to be fed, eggs to gather, canned fruit to be brought from the cellar, and the table set for supper. But I found most of these chores enjoyable and often made them into some kind of game. When the last dish had been dried and put away, I quickly did any studying that had to be done so that there might be some time left for games or reading.

My father was an accomplished oral reader, so many delightful hours were spent listening to him read stories from *The Youth's Companion* or from humorous books such as *Slow Train Through Arkansas* or *Huckleberry Finn*. We could hardly wait for weekend evenings when he would read a longer time.

There were many other things to be enjoyed during winter weekends and on holiday vacations. We played card games such as Flench and Rook, or other simple games using these numeral cards; playing-cards were not allowed in our home. Checkers was a popular game; members of the family and even the neighbors were always trying to dethrone the champion.

Paper games were frequently played by the younger members of the family: the universal tic-tac-toe-three-in-a-row and another game in which we used a circle divided into segments containing numbers. In this game, each player in turn would say, "Tic-tac-toe around I go; when I stop, I stop at this." He would put his pencil down on one of the numbers. The player with the highest total, after all the numbers were taken, was the winner. There were many other games that required only pencils and scrap paper or a slate.

From the time I learned to read, I had a book in my hand at every opportunity. I never lacked for entertainment if I could find a book. In fact, I reread many of them. I still recall some that I enjoyed when quite young: *Bible Stories*, *Little People of Japan*, *Aunt Martha's Corner Cupboard*, and my older brothers' school readers with their many informative articles and poetry.

During the summer months, we could hardly wait to get supper over and our chores done so we could use the long evenings for playing outdoor games. These games such as Sheep-in-the-Pen, Ten Step, Andy-over, or Kick the Can kept us entertained and shouting with glee until we were called in to wash our feet and get ready for bed.

As teenagers, we never lacked for entertainment. During the winter season, we spent many afternoons and evenings skating on the smooth ice which formed early on the shoots and bays of the Mississippi River and on the ponds in the area. Skating parties with huge bonfires and wiener roasts were common. Sledding parties were thrilling and romantic. When a suitable snow fell, some farm lad would hitch his dad's team to the big sleigh, complete with wagon box, hay, and blankets, and gather up the neighboring youths for a moonlight ride. He usually managed to turn us over in a snow bank before it was over.

The youth of today don't need to think that we lacked music in those days. Most homes had either an organ or a piano. We had a piano, and I spent many hours during the vacation months practicing my music lessons. (The best part was getting to ride the horse some distance to take a lesson each week.) Many families had a victrola. We were a bit more modern; we had a cabinet Edison with many thick, disk records. This was a very practical form of entertainment, as we were able to be entertained while we worked. My brother played a few pieces on the piano; "Red Wing" and "The Black Hawk Waltz" are two of the pieces that I remember. I played mostly hymns to please my parents, but, also, some popular pieces, Christmas carols, and waltzes. Yes, we had our music back then!

A popular entertainment for the older youths was buggy riding; this could be enjoyed the year around. The young men tried to outdo each other to see who could have the fastest horse and the fanciest buggy. Of course, these later gave way to the popular "Tin Lizzy" which excited the same competition. Whether it was a buggy or a car, the rides were both entertaining and romantic. They enabled the young folk to go farther and have a wider variety of entertainment.

Frequent parties were held throughout the year: birthday, valentine, homecoming, graduation, or just a Saturday night party. Kissing games and singing-and-swinging games were played at some parties. Most parents in our community objected to dancing, but these play-party games were just as much fun.

When I was permitted to date, my boyfriend and I would usually sit either in the porch swing or in the parlor and talk until ten o'clock, my curfew hour. In order to attend high school, I boarded with a family in Hardin. There was no privacy in their living room, so when my boyfriend came we sat on the piano bench and played the player piano with the volume turned up loudly enough that we could talk without being heard.

Living on a farm near Hamburg, I, like most of my contemporaries, found my own entertainment through the week; but on Saturday night we went into town. There was nothing much to do there except to walk the streets and gather into groups and talk. However, in the 1920s, two enterprising citizens changed that. They decided that the village of Hamburg needed a movie house—it was never called a theater—where a feature film and a newsreel could be shown on Saturday night. Gus Beer owned a small building near his little cafe. With the addition of a projection room over the entrance, some hard benches, and a screen, the building was soon converted into Hamburg's first and only movie house. Louis Phillips procured and projected the films for a grateful audience, literally a group of thrilled spectators. We eagerly waited for the lights to dim and for the pictures and dialogue to flash on the screen. We didn't even mind the delay when a new reel had to be put on, or the longer delay when one broke and had to be mended. Going to the movies with my date or my girlfriends was more fun than walking around town or even car riding.

We certainly had entertainment before there was radio or television, but it wasn't the "canned" variety; it was truly homespun. We devised things to do and ways to do them. There was little or no distinction between entertainment for the poor or for the more affluent. Best of all, it was clean, wholesome fun.

LITTLE LADIES AT PLAY

Mavis Alexander

Nature had so artfully arranged the personality of the old Furrow Place that it had all the right ingredients to give magical memories to three little sisters who in the early 1930s had few store-bought toys but great imaginations. The weathered but sturdy one-story, five-room house was shaded in the front by a couple of old maples with great sprawling limbs and a couple of spicy fragrant cedars. The large lawn was so luxuriously webbed with blue grass that even diligent dandelions could scarcely get a foothold. An orchard of apple, peach, and pear trees, plus a grape arbor and, of course, a family-sized garden spot covered the land directly back of the house. Beyond that was a small timbered area with a stream crooking and curving its way to Buckhart Creek and eventually the Sangamon River.

I was about five years old, Bernadine nine, and Arlene ten when the fairy-tale like adventures of my childhood play times at the Furrow Place began being indelibly imprinted in my mind.

We learned early that we had to share in the family chores before we could play. Luckily, we girls thought of a lot of the tasks as fun instead of work. Dusting the furniture was to be avoided if possible and, if not, was done just as fast as possible. The spots hit were where others might spy the dust. Other "do it fast jobs" were such things as bringing in buckets of water from the well and carrying in firewood. We liked to gather eggs, but learned quickly to leave grouchy old "setting" hens alone. We also enjoyed feeding and watering the animals that had babies. Also, we helped mother gather "greens" such as lambs quarter, sour dock, and wild lettuce to be cooked with bacon and cornmeal dumplings. Sometimes while out picking "greens," we girls would get sidetracked and start hunting four-leaf clovers or dry fuzzy topped dandelions. We would blow really hard on the fuzzy tops of the dandelions singing, "He loves me; He loves me not" and whichever phrase we were on when the last of the fuzz blew away was our answer. Then a giggling we would go back to gathering "greens." As far as cleaning these vegetables, I couldn't wait until a machine would be invented to do that. If Dad smelled the "greens" cooking for supper, he would ask, "Been out picking weeds again, huh?" He knew it was a labor of love especially for him.

One job I liked better than the other girls was helping Dad and Brownie, our old shepherd dog, bring in our herd of about ten jersey cows when they occasionally failed to come in for milking time. I learned to milk at an early age and, to add variety to my task, I sometimes tried aiming a stream of milk at a knothole in the barn wall. I eventually became rather accurate; however, nobody but God and I knew it. Dad always acted proud of me for helping him get the milking done.

In our big square 1926 Dodge, we traveled about five miles south over dirt roads into Edinburg or on into Springfield to take our large cans of cream, which we collected each morning by hand-cranking the milk through our deLaval cream separator. When our folks received the cream money, we would then all get an ice cream cone.

Many a golden summer day, with chores behind us, we would each grab an old blanket and head back into our make-believe world in the orchard. Wherever we spread our blanket—whether on the ground or in the low sections of a tree—that was our home. Making mud pies using old pans and a stick for a spoon was our specialty. We would form them into smooth pretty shapes to be put out in the sun to bake or we would dig rather deep holes to put them in so they would stay cool like Mother putting her fruits and milk in the cave. We would use sticks for our telephones and carry on quite colorful conversations with each other as we made up community news such as we had heard the ladies tell when they got together.

If we got hungry while playing and any of the fruit was ripe, we just polished it up with our hands and ate it sun-warmed and fresh—except peaches, I couldn't handle that fuzz; it had to go. We were so quiet sometimes that Mother would call out, "Girls, are you all alright?" Dad always called us "Ladies," but, as you will see later on, we weren't always little ladies.

With the coming of autumn, Dad stressed school and good grades. There was still plenty of time for winter fun. One time, Dad had to come through a blinding blizzard to walk several of us children home because the snow was deep and frozen so hard we could walk on top of it. Our one-room, one-teacher school was about one-half mile from our house. We hustled right along, but with Dad we felt secure—and it was sort of a daring experience.

In the winter evenings our Aladdin lamp gave out its bright white light for our studying, for Dad reading his western stories, and for Mother darning. Mother was a good storyteller, and sometimes she took time for that. On the weekends, we did what most families did—make taffy.

"Aunty" and "Unk" lived very comfortably in the city. One time Unk had come out with his business friends to go hunting. There was quite a snow, but we girls weren't aware that we were poor, so, right in front of him and his friends, we came out with our miserable looking makeshift sled. They

always got us something very nice for Christmas so we got a superdeluxe sled for Christmas that year. My beloved Furrow Place set atop a steep hill. One day soon after we got our sled, a snow came that packed down just right for great sledding. My sister Bernadine said she would take me for a ride down the hill on the new sled. We started gliding down the incline quite nicely and swiftly, and she was able to guide it marvelously considering it was our maiden voyage. "Hold on," she called out, "I am going to turn it around so we can go back up." Of course, we went every way but up. It was another of life's lessons learned: When things are going down hill, ride it out!

Our Furrow Place was blessed by being surrounded by loving neighbors who just seemed part of a big family. The Lashes, who lived about a quarter of a mile west of us, had three daughters who matched our ages of six, nine, and ten very closely. But in those days, mothers were careful that children didn't make pests of themselves to other people, so we got to play together only occasionally. On this particular day, Dad's three little ladies went up to visit Evelyn, Lois, and Virgie. We played around for awhile, then wandered out into their pasture. We were all sort of restless as it was unusually hot and sultry. Someone noticed the little pond nearby, and we wandered over there. The older girls decided we could cool off by going wading. As we walked in, we found the mud in the bottom was about ankle deep and it was very slick. It wasn't long before someone fell down and got soaked and muddy head to toe. Someone else let out a loud giggle; then, in domino fashion, first one went down, then another, until we were all flipping and flopping around in the mud-thickened water. Covered with slimy, smelly mud, someone shed an undergarment and hung it on a nearby post to dry; soon someone else shed her dress, but nobody took off both. The two nearby posts were hung full of mud-soaked clothes. Mr. Jones came down the road in his horse-drawn wagon. He came to a stop out in the road just a moment, then went on. In a short time, we saw our mothers coming—one from one direction—one from the other. Getting to within yelling distance, they called out angrily, "What are you girls doing in that hog wallow?" Mr. Jones had told on us. Mother scolded us all the way home, threatening to tell Dad as soon as possible. He was quite a strict disciplinarian, and we worried about that all the rest of the afternoon. Later, I did see Dad and Mother talking, out where we couldn't hear them, and they were just laughing. Still expecting the worst, I could not imagine what they were laughing about.

Now, years later, what rich memories I have of my parents and the Furrow Place in those years of 1931-1936. Those weren't Depression years in my memory bank.

THE GAMES WE PLAYED

Katherine Cravens

In the 1920s, the games we played were simple and often had an English influence. Among those games were London Bridge Is Falling Down and Ring around the Rosy, games performed to the tune of a little ditty.

In the latter, "Rosy" referred to the *Black Plague*!

Ring around the Rosy, a pocket full of posy
Ashes, ashes, we all fall down.

Upon reciting the last line of the rhyme, while still holding hands, we would laughingly fall onto the grass. We were totally unaware that to "fall down" meant death from the Plague. Drop the Handkerchief, another child's game, also required a ring of children. The player who was "it" would skip around the outside of the circle and casually drop the handkerchief behind a child in the ring. A race around the circle in

opposite directions to reach the open spot vacated by the recipient of the dropped cloth decided who would be the next child to drop the handkerchief.

Still another game, Red Rover, consisted of two teams. Approximately thirty feet apart, the teams, holding hands, would face each other. At Miles Station School, the line of demarcation was the cement walkway leading from the porch of the building to the front gate of the playground. First one team, and then the other, would sing a challenging chant. "Red Rover, Red Rover, send Jack right on over." The challenged team would send the player over to break through the line formed by the opposing team. When the player was unable to break through the line, he became a captive of the opposing team. This challenging went on and on until recess ended or until one team had captured all the opposing team.

Andy-over was another game in which we chose teams. In this game, we tossed a ball over the school building. Should the ball be caught, the receiving team would separate and invade the opposing team's territory from both sides of the building. The player with the concealed ball would tag as many of the opposing team as possible for his team. Needless to say, the team having the most players at the end of recess was the winner. (The honor system decided whether or not the ball was caught before or after the ball touched the ground.)

Hopscotch, jump rope, and marbles were played during that time. We also slid down straw stacks, climbed trees, flew down snowy slopes on sleds, and skated on icy creek beds.

The years passed. The games we played became more competitive and more enjoyable. By the 1930s, we were playing softball. A new game known as May I? was, without a doubt, invented by an English teacher. I believe the game was originally called "Mother, May I?" The object of May I? was for the players to get from one place to another with "elephant" or "baby" steps. The leader would give the orders, "Billy take ten elephant steps." In the event Billy forgot to say, "May I?" he forfeited his turn. The player reaching the designated destination first was the winner.

When heavy snow began to melt, we built forts and threw snowballs at each other. When the weather was too cold to play outside, we played indoor games, tic-tac-toe, connect the dots, and a guessing game, I See Something. Sometimes we played Simon Says, musical chairs, made paper chains, colored, sang, or read. At home, we played Parcheesi, rummy, and checkers.

By the 1940s, we had added volleyball to our list of games and began to play softball with other schools. We were also roller-skating on the hard roads.

Almost every rural home had an old tire swing hanging from one rope securely tied to a large limb of an old maple tree. Although the tire pinched our legs, and its circumference made it difficult to cling to, the swing was almost always in use. Long after the tire was gone, the rope would often remain dangling from the limb; and it, too, would be used to swing upon. For many years afterwards, one could tell where an old swing had been by the exposed ground worn free of grass by bare feet, and by the obvious depression of the earth beneath the limb.

People were not as outgoing in years gone by as they are today. A "bashful beau" occasionally became a "kissing cousin" when hide-and-seek was played at a summer's evening get-together. Innocent kissing games—Spin the Bottle and Post Office—encouraged the young men to display tender emotions toward the girls nearest their hearts.

Because of the games, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves with innocent fun in the late '30s and early '40s. I often wondered if children today, surrounded by magical electronic games, really enjoy themselves as we did.

SKATING ON THE MISSISSIPPI

Florence Ourth

Our family had moved to Nauvoo in 1923 when I was a senior in high school. We loved the Mississippi. In the summer, we went swimming in the river every afternoon. In the winter, we spent all our free time at the river on the ice.

In the late 1920s, the coast guard built a refuge harbor at Nauvoo so that boats could come in during a bad storm. Protected from the wind, the river would freeze smoothly in the harbor which made a favorite place to skate. When the ice was thick enough for the men to cut and store in ice-houses, it left open places that froze very smoothly. Sometimes snow covered the ice, then everyone would bring shovels and shove the snow until a clear space was made to skate.

All our family skated—Mom and Dad, my sister, Mildred, and my brother, Jack. We skated not only in the daytime, but often after supper, especially if it was a moonlit night. But if there were no moon, we would take a lantern and set it on the ice to help us keep our bearings.

Our skates were the kind that clamped on the soles of shoes and were tightened by skate keys which hung around our necks on strings. At the back of the skate, there was a strap that went around our ankles. In those days, we wore shoes that laced up about six inches above the ankle, and thus helped give support. There were a few people who were fortunate enough to have shoe skates, which fit better than clamp-ons.

On a Saturday afternoon, a lot of young people gathered at the river. Some brought sleds to give their younger brothers and sisters a ride on the ice. A bonfire would be made on the shore of driftwood, and logs were found to sit on.

The young fellows would get a game of "Shinny" going. This was similar to ice hockey, with a tin can as a puck and hockey sticks fashioned from driftwood from along the river. These games moved quickly, and one learned to stay out of the way of the players.

Sometimes the skaters would skate in a line, holding hands and getting up speed. Then the pivot man on the lefthand end of the line would "crack the whip" by digging in his skates and stopping suddenly. The ones on the other end would be whirled around almost dangerously fast. Sometimes couples would skate facing each other, with hands on each other's shoulders—he skating backwards, she frontwards.

But for me, the most fun was skating partners. In my high school class was a young man named Arnold Ourth, an excellent skater and one of the few who had ice skates. When he invited me to skate partners with him, I accepted. We crossed our hands in front of us so that my right hand was held firmly in his left and my left hand held in his right, which helped to hold me up. He taught me to take long strokes, while our bodies leaned in the direction of the stroke, first right, then left. There was a special rhythm to this as we gradually got up speed until we just sailed along—an exhilarating experience.

Going longer distances up and down the river, we learned to watch for air holes where the ice was thin. One could usually tell where they were because the ice was whiter around them. Sometimes there were cracks in the ice, not too big, caused by the lowering of the water at the dam in Keokuk. But we got up speed enough to jump and be carried over them.

Sometimes, if we were thirsty, we would stop, stoop, and drink the cold water out of the crack. We thought it was safe. We figured all the germs were frozen. Little did we know about pollution in those days. We even got brave enough to venture across the river, which is a mile wide at Nauvoo. With the swift current in the channel, one could not be sure how thick the ice was in the middle of the river, but we felt safe when we stayed near the trail made by the men who carried the mail.

This trail began at the Parley Street boat landing where the Nauvoo ferry ran in the summertime to Montrose, which

was across the river. In those days, everything came in and out of Nauvoo by ferry, including the daily mail. But just before the river was going to freeze, the ferry would be taken to the refuge harbor for safety because in the spring, when the ice went out, it took everything with it. Then the mail and passengers who wanted to board the train at Montrose were brought back and forth by motor boat, and, later, by a rowboat with runners on it that was pushed by two men ready to jump in the boat and use oars if the ice started to break through.

When the ice was thick enough, Model T Ford trucks were used to carry the mail and, also, to haul the coal from the freight cars. Air holes were marked with bushes or small cedar trees.

Some boys took chances by driving their cars on the river. They thought it was great fun to get up speed, put on the brakes, and then whirl around. Fortunately, none went through the ice.

One winter, Raymond Repplinger tried to make an ice boat without sails. It was to be propelled by a radiator fan from a car that would hopefully work like an airplane; it was not, though, successful and sat mournfully on the ice all winter.

One Christmas, my friend Arnold gave me a pair of shoe skates and skating was even more fun. Several years later, we were married and were able to buy the William Marks home right on the river, close to the refuge harbor. When our first baby came, I bundled him up, put him in the baby carriage, and took him down on the ice for his afternoon nap. Later there were four more sons, and they all learned to skate.

I am a great-grandmother now. I was seventy years old when I went skating for the last time. That year my ankles were a little wobbly and my knees a little shaky. My husband had passed away, so I did not have the firm support of my former partner. At that age one does not know how brittle bones are. So, reluctantly, I made it my last skate. Looking back, some of my happiest memories are still the joys of skating on the Mississippi.

SUMMERTIMEFUN-TIME

Helen C. Harless

I grew up when "fun" was generated principally in the local neighborhood, near Canton, Illinois. Times were "hard," money was scarce—but I was never bored, and it did not take much money for us to have fun.

The Browns lived across the road. Three of them were friends of my sister, who was seven years older than I. Robert Brown was a year older than me, and Howard Brown was a year younger, so they were my playmates. I never lived in a neighborhood where there were girls with whom to play. As I look back, this was a plus.

I had a playhouse equipped with a play stove, a doll bed, a table and chairs, and dolls. Bob and Howard and I played "house" almost daily. Bob would be the father, I was the mother, and the dolls were the children of our make-believe family. Howard was always the doctor because he could ride my pony to make his "calls," and one of the dolls would be in need of his "medical expertise" most of the time.

From the playhouse, we ventured to the creek, which was our swimming pool, and to the woods where we held our picnics and swung on huge grapevines that hung from the big maple trees. The creek wound down between both the Brown farm and ours. We waded in it; skipped rocks in it; gleaned Indian beads from its shores; and tiny minnows from its clear, running water. To make it our ideal swimming hole, we often dammed it up with the bright, gooey clay from its banks. One day, we had just finished damming it up. The bank was slick,

and the water was getting deep. Bob attempted to climb up the bank, lost his footing, and slithered back into the swimming hole we had created. It all happened so fast that he ended up with lungs full of water. He went under once, and came up gasping, not able to get his breath. He was floundering. I saw that he was in trouble, so the second time he came up out of the water I grabbed him by the hair (that is all I could reach) and maneuvered him until I could drag him out on the bank. I got him on his stomach, lifted him up at his waist, and dropped him with a thud. In the meantime, I told Howard to run for his mother. Before his mother got to us, I had lifted Bob and dropped him three times, on the fourth thud, he coughed up water and was able to draw breath again. This was my first experience with CPR and, thank goodness, it worked.

The creek was also our fishing place. Our poles were made from the maple trees and our string from kite string roll. Our hooks were large safety pins bent to our liking. This fishing gear, plus the juicy worms dug up from the chicken lot, helped us land a little sunfish once in awhile. Fishing for us usually meant damming up the creek and using our seine, made of two, one inch in diameter, maple limbs, a gunny sack, and string. We would open up the gunny sack and tie it to the limbs with the string. One of us would get on each side of the seine, and the third person would carry the bucket. We would go upstream against the current with our seine, and come up with a generous catch of minnows. Rather than turn them loose back into the stream, we would dump them into the horse tank where we could watch them. When Dad would turn the horses loose to get a drink from the tank after a long, hot day, they would stick their noses down into that maze of minnows and come up just as suddenly because of the annoyance of the catch of minnows we had deposited in the tank. I can still hear my Dad say, "If you kids don't get those fish out of that tank, I'm going to spank all three of you!" He never did spank us, but we knew he meant us to get the fish out of the tank—at least until we got another good seine catch. This was an ongoing activity all summer long.

The swimming hole had another fascination for us. Attached to the big maple trees along the creek bank were several long, wild grapevines. We swung back and forth on the grapevines until our arms held us no longer, and then we would swing out over the "hole" and drop into the water with quite a splash. We didn't need diving boards. Swinging on the grapevines and dropping into the "hole" was much more fun.

Besides Bob and Howard, my summertime fun included my little spotted pony Buster. He was so gentle and so talented. He could sit up, play dead, and shake hands just as well as any dog. We all rode him, and he pulled our little black buggy. He served as our transportation to carry drinking water to the men working in the hay fields or on the threshing "run"; and we drove him back and forth to school three miles away.

The day of Buster's death was a blow to the whole family. Dad dug the grave down in the apple orchard, and the rest of us lined the grave with rose petals and tears when Buster was laid to rest. I am sure he resides in Heaven. A sweeter, more loved pony never lived.

Besides Buster, we always had dogs and cats, but among our other farm friends were the baby rabbits and the orphaned piglets we raised on bottles. Our dog Shep was always following Dad on the binder in the oats field. Occasionally, Dad would accidentally uproot a rabbit nest. Shep would pick up any stray baby rabbits and carry them to the house. The babies would be well swathed in Shep's slobbers, but they were never hurt in any way. Mom would get a cardboard box and line it with straw or clover; then it was up to my sister and me to nurse the baby rabbits with doll bottles full of watered down cow's milk and fresh clover heads until they were big enough to live with Mother Nature. When that time came, we would hitch up Buster and take our little rabbits to the woods. They would always hop off happy.

As a child living in the country, I made my first money by raising a runt piglet from a litter where there were not enough dinner buckets. At first, we would put the piglet in a cardboard box and keep him behind the kitchen stove. This meant keeping the box spotlessly clean. We also would feed him watered down cow's milk, and, after he grew considerably, we would put him in a pen at the barn and add oats to the milk and corn. With such tender, loving care, he would soon catch up with his litter mates, but he was always mine, kept separate, and marketed in my name. This money was put in my first savings account and eventually helped put me through college. Tending these little animals was both a caring and fun experience; they became real friends of mine.

Our backyard was the croquet court. We had many family rounds, but my favorite competitor was Grandma Strawn. She was such a precious, tiny woman but a strong competitor when it came to croquet.

Each summer meant kite flying time. Dad would make the frame for the kite, and Mamma would cover it with newspaper and make the cloth tail out of scraps from her sewing basket. I can remember daydreaming about how it must feel to soar up there like that kite. Occasionally, the kite would hit a hard wind current and take a nose-dive, but I usually managed to "let out" all of the string of the ball—and the kite rose to a tiny speck up there in the sky.

The picnic season always started with the school picnic in May. The mothers of the students would always bring well-laden baskets. Mother's favorite contributions were fried chicken, potato salad, and coconut cake. Following the school picnic were the family reunions or the neighborhood get-togethers at Big Creek Park in Canton. The adults would visit, and the kids would try out all the playground equipment. I remember one time when I was "working up" one of the swings. I was about at my peak, when a little kid ran under my swing and the board seat of the swing hit the child across the forehead. He was knocked down flat and a big goose-egg developed, but, thank goodness, there was no permanent damage or bleeding.

My only conclusion is that living on a farm with loving parents, a sister, good neighbors, and little money made for a happy, fun-loving time, and there was always something to do. I never had time to be bored or lonely.

THE BUILDERS

Margaret E. Artman

During the Great Depression, our family, and others like us who lived at the poverty level, moved often. When my father heard of a better opportunity to feed and clothe his family, we packed our few belongings and left. But the fall that my parents rented Jenkins Cabin was the beginning of the best four years of my childhood.

Situated on a hill above the Salt Fork River, northwest of Fairmount, Illinois, the small acreage also had a sturdy barn; several sheds; a fenced garden plot; a peach orchard; bee hives; rolling pastureland; and two fields to grow corn for our horses, a milk cow, and the chickens. Since our two older brothers left home to find work and our sister was married, my brother Archie and I explored the farm by ourselves.

In the bottomland below our hill, we discovered a solid mass of wild bluebells every spring. Their sweet fragrance greeted anyone who descended to the river. We located moist hillsides where the gray and yellow sponge mushrooms seemed to spring up overnight. We stumbled upon a great hollow tree in the center of the woods that had an opening so wide that we could both crawl inside and stand upright. We threw bridles on the old mares and rode bareback up and down the rolling hills.

That first year, I was nine and Archie was twelve. We took a shortcut to the one-room Walnut Grove school. Even though we climbed over barbed wire fences, balanced our footing on a log to cross an icy stream, hurried through the woods and uphill again to Mr. Swaney's barn lot, then walked downhill and up again for another mile to the schoolhouse, we still saved time. Otherwise, we would have had to walk around gravel roads to the slab pavement and follow it to school.

Before the school term ended, we had several friends. So that summer, we formed a neighborhood club. There were two Swaney brothers, Eugene and Dick. There was our closest neighbor, Ted Wolfe. Then down the road and around the bend from us lived the Hillard girls, Bonnie and Patty. Across the woods, on the gravel road to school, June Swaney lived. She was a cousin of the Swaney brothers.

After forming the club, we needed a clubhouse. I don't know who suggested that we could build our own cabin, but we soon agreed to meet the next day at a tiny clearing not too far from our house. To this day, I don't know who owned the land. All along this hill above the Salt Fork River, people drove out and dumped trash and garbage with, evidently, no respect for nature's beauty. The land may have been public property connected to the river below because no one ever told us that we couldn't play in the clearing.

Anyway, we each brought a hammer or nails or a rusty saw—whatever we could slip out of our fathers' tool boxes—because we visualized a neat log cabin on "our" land.

Archie stood head and shoulders above most of the gang, so he did the heavy work. (At home, when Mom told us both to knock potato bugs off our potato vines and into a kerosene bucket, we thought that was hard work. But this work was for the clubhouse, and we toiled happily at our job to build it.) He dug four deep holes, eight feet apart, with Pop's spade. With help from the Swaney boys, he cut down four young saplings, trimmed them to the desired length, and dropped them into the holes. While we girls pushed the loose dirt into the holes, the boys tamped it down with round sticks. Then Archie and the boys cut down several more young trees, smaller than the first four. They trimmed each one into nine feet lengths and nailed them crosswise to the north side of two posts.

As dusk approached, we all stood at the edge of the clearing, admired each other's blisters, and gazed lovingly at the one wall of our cabin. After taking a vow to meet there the next morning to continue the construction, we left in different directions, on bikes or on foot, toward home.

Our heads had hardly hit the pillow, it seemed, when Mom called to us from the kitchen, "Roll out, you two. Eat your oatmeal and meet me in the strawberry patch. Mr. Jenkins will be out later for a crate of berries." Our landlord lived in Fairmount. We picked berries and he sold them, giving us part of the money. Mom was eager to earn a few dollars for groceries. Kids being kids, Archie and I were just eager to get done picking so we could head down the road to our cabin plans. We surely didn't hang around home, whining to Mom, "What can we do?"

Racing barefoot along the dusty road, we stopped, surprised, to see no one at the clearing. The sun now shone high above our heads. Yet, everything stood as we had left it the past evening. Where were the others? Maybe they would be here later.

We wandered around the clearing. We inspected our work. We discussed where to begin today. Finally, Archie grabbed Pop's old saw from its hiding place in tall weeds and trimmed three short poles to form a door frame. After nailing them in place, he pried loose a flat rock from the hillside and placed it before the door frame for a step. In the meantime, I had gathered several stones to form a walk.

After dropping the flat rock on the ground, Archie sat down on it and looked over our situation. I stood there, waiting for him to make his next move. Sweat beads dripped off the end

of my nose. A tiny bee crawled along my upper arm. I slapped it away, but not before it stung me.

Archie spit across the clearing and knocked a tumble bug off course. "Wonder what happened to the gang?" he asked.

"Maybe they got into trouble for takin' their Dad's tools without askin'," I suggested.

Suddenly, the one-sided cabin that had been so much fun yesterday with the club members now looked like long hours of hard work.

"Ah—let's go home," Archie said. "I might go fishin'."

As we moped back to the house, we met our mother on her way to the mailbox. "You two look like two miners after they've dug for coal all day. Go to the house, get my bar of Fels Naptha soap off the washboard, go to the river, and scrub yourselves clean!"

The Salt Fork flowed east, downstream from Homer, Illinois, to wind past our place. Along the way, tributaries, clear cold creeks, tumbled out of wooded areas to join hands with the river. At the bottom of our hill there was one such creek. Daily wear and tear from the force of it into the river formed a deep sandy hole, large enough to swim in during the summer season. In the middle of this hole rested an enormous boulder. We kids took turns crawling up its slippery green sides to dive back into the water.

When we reached the bottom of the hill, but out of sight from the river, we heard laughter and screams and constant splashing. Who had found our favorite swimming hole?

Archie dashed towards the river bank. I ran a close second behind him. There—taking turns diving from the big rock—were several members of the neighborhood club.

Four years later, as Pop drove past the clearing on our way to yet another small farm, I glanced from the back seat of the car at the one wall of our cabin. Several poles had worked loose and hung at an angle. My brother shrugged. "Fun while it lasted," he said.

We had built friendships and dreams and part of a cabin during those years at the Jenkins farm above the Salt Fork River. The December before we left, World War II started. The following spring, Pop had rented the Grimes place, on downstream near a spot in the Salt Fork called Mouth of Jordan. I finished the eighth grade at the one-room Jordan school. As teenagers, my brother and I now faced new challenges in our ever-widening horizon of life.

OUR COUNTRY LANE

Helen E. Rilling

Country lanes are quiet, pretty little ways to reach hidden places, and they often pass by the homes we hold dear in our memories.

Our lane was a mile long and reached to the Sangamon County line on the east. Our house sat in the middle on the south side. There were three other houses up and down the lane, and we passed them as we traveled both ways most every day. The rural route mailbox was at the west end, and we walked to the east end on our way to and from a one-room school. Of course, if the weather was bad we rode in a closed buggy, in a box wagon, or on a sled.

The lane was enclosed mostly by Osage orange hedges. Some were quite tall and thick, serving as fences for cow pastures. Other sections were kept cut about waist high. The hedges were a haven for wild birds. Nests were tucked into every available crotch. Also sprinkled generously along the hedges were gooseberry bushes. We loved to pick and eat the sour puckery berry, and were happy when we found one that was purple and ripe.

In the early spring all along the hedge bottoms, sheltered from bad weather and cow's hooves, were wild strawberries. These were a treat after a long winter of salted meat and canned foods. We spent hours along the hedges munching berries, watching fledgling birds, and peering at passersby who took our lane as a shortcut to New Berlin or Alexander. The lane was black dirt. It was inches deep in dust in the dry months and ankle deep in mud when it rained. My father had a homemade drag he used to smooth out the ruts in the spring. It was made of heavy boards set on their sides and covered with wide planks. Braces were added to hold it rigid. A team of strong horses were hitched to it and dragged it up and down the lane. Often loose dirt was smoothed over a seepy place, and when the first Model T car went through, it sunk into the ooze and was stuck until a team of horses pulled it out. Father rode the drag to add more weight. Large rocks and cement building blocks were also tied on the top. This contraption stood on its side in a fence corner the rest of the year. It was, however, a necessary piece of equipment used in maintaining lanes where the landowners had to keep their own road fit to travel over.

We had one large iron girder bridge over Spring Creek and two wooden bridges over smaller branches. The wooden ones had heavy planks run crosswise and two wide planks run across for heavy vehicles to cross on. In July, when the big steam engines for threshing grain moved from farm to farm, even heavier planks were laid down for the cleated wheels of the engine. It was an exciting time for youngsters. We'd hear the toot of the engine way down our lane. They always signaled when moving to another farm. The men would move the big planks into position and the huge engine would slowly crawl across the bridge. We kids were always on hand for all the bridge crossings and would yell and leap in the air when the crossing was complete and the engine and long red separator were safe on the other side.

The bridges were wonderful places to play. We'd lay on our stomachs and drop rocks through the cracks and watch the water ripple into many rings. Sometimes a turtle would be sleeping under the bridge in the shade. We'd pepper him with rocks until he pulled his head and tail under his shell. The lane was only one track wide, and when neighbors met, each had to take to the ditch to pass. It was a favorite place for friends to rest their horses and visit a spell.

At times there were ten children up and down the lane. We held horse races with our ponies and tame horses. We also played with a wire wheel rim and a "t" stick used to guide it. We'd race each other up and down the smooth tracks from one end of the lane to the other. The object was to run the whole lane without our hoop falling over.

The banks at the side of the lane were covered with tall grass. Rabbits hid their nests there. On a walk down the lane, we often had a dozen long-legged bunnies jump out of their fur-lined nest and hop through holes in the hedge to hide on the other side until we were gone. Sometimes we could still see their fuzzy tails trembling in fear.

We met many friendly snakes and mud turtles near the creeks. Large hawks, black crows, and colorful pheasants dusted themselves in the wheel tracks. Coveys of quail scurried across the lane to eat in the wheat and oat fields.

From May on, the banks of our lane were beautiful with pink and white wild roses. Mullen stalks and elderberry bushes were scattered up and down. Orange black-eyed Susans bloomed late in the summer.

Apple orchards were also available along the lane. In the late summer, we kids would climb a tree and eat the juicy plump fruit.

In the years of my childhood, we were always moving up and down the lane, keeping in touch with each other and sharing in the good times.

SUMMERTIME FUNHOOKED ON FISHING

Ida P. Dunsing

Remembering summertime fun recalls the year I was ten and spent the vacation months with my newly wed Aunt Anna and Uncle John Schmidt. Though they worked in Jerseyville before their marriage, both were born and raised on farms. They decided farming was the life they wanted, and rented land in the Nutwood bottoms, about two miles from the embryo village of the same name. There they set to housekeeping in an old log house in the midst of a pecan grove. The only other buildings on the place were a horse barn and a stable with a spacious hayloft.

After school was closed for the summer, Aunt Anna and Uncle John came to Grafton by horse and wagon for supplies. I begged to go home with them. I was warned that it was a long, tiring trip and that possibly I would have to stay the entire summer, as they would be too busy to make the twenty-five mile journey just to bring me home. I'd never been so far from home, nor separated from my brothers and sisters, but I persisted, finally winning out.

The first days passed quickly; there were many new things to explore. But I was truly alone so far as playmates went, and the lack of companionship developed into homesickness. Aunt Anna did her best to keep me occupied with small household tasks and to invent entertainment. On the day before Easter, she sent me to the wheat field to gather a bundle of the lush green stems. She simmered the green wheat in a kettle of water for fifteen minutes, then boiled eggs in the solution until they were "hard cooked." The eggs were a brilliant canary yellow when dipped out and cooled. She worked the same magic with skins of red onions and produced rosy pink eggs. She wrapped other eggs in brightly colored calico and cooked till "hard." These eggs came out with flowers printed all over. No purchased dyes ever produced such gorgeous Easter eggs.

Aunt Anna constantly admonished me to "be a lady," but she did not object when Uncle John decided to teach me the manly sport of fishing. The Nutwood Drainage District Association had completed a great levee to protect hundreds of acres of prime farm land from recurring Illinois river floods. The levee ditch was a little more than a quarter mile from the house. A crop of willows already grew on the bank.

Uncle John showed me how to select and cut a willow sprout strong enough to use as a rod. He further showed me how to tie a cord securely to the pole and fasten a hook to the loose end. He must have contemplated some fishing on his own because he had a supply of hooks on hand. He made a bobber from an ordinary bottle cork. He taught me how to dig fish worms and how to thread them onto the hook. Then came the moment when we lowered the bait into the water with great care, so as not to frighten the fish, and waited. Great numbers of fish had made their way upstream from the river into the ditch waters—and they were hungry. Hardly had we cast, when the cork began to bob. Away it went as far out into the stream as the line would allow; then it disappeared entirely.

My heart thumped. My breath ceased. The birds stopped singing. The frogs stopped croaking. The whole earth stood still. A fish was on my line! I could feel the tug, tug, tug, as it tried to free itself from the hook. Slowly I began to hear a voice from far, far away: "Lift the pole, Ida. Lift it straight up in front of you and swing the fish in toward you." My frozen arms began to respond. With both hands gripping the willow pole, I lifted it from the water. In my haste to save my catch, I heaved with all my ten-year-old might. That huge glistening blue gill literally flew over my head and landed in a clump of grass and willow. I had caught my first fish.

There was then the problem of preserving the catch until we were ready to go home. Without a live net or creel of any

kind, Uncle John demonstrated the simple technique of cutting a forked willow branch, one fork longer than the other. He slipped the short fork through the gill and out the mouth of the fish; then he embedded the long fork firmly in the mud bank with the fish dangling in the water. Sunfish and blue gill were abundant. Going home time might find a dozen or more "keepers" on the stringer.

One more step remained in my first lesson. "You catch it; you clean it." Uncle John showed me each step of this operation. From there on, Aunt Anna took over. She seasoned all the fish, dredged them in flour and corn meal, and sizzled them in her big frying pan. Nothing ever tasted so good as those golden brown fillets.

Uncle John never knew—I wish I had remembered to tell him—that when that homemade bobber went under the first time, I, too, was hooked for life on the great sport of fishing that for me began as a simple amusement on a summer day.

From the day of that first lesson, there was no more worry about how to entertain me. I'd just say—like the lady I was supposed to be—"Aunt Anna, if you don't need me, I think I'll go fishing."

THE SNOW WAR

Glenna Lamb

It was not just a battle; it was a war that lasted several weeks. It was fought at a one-room school with the strange name of Zion's Neck, three miles west of Glasgow, in Scott County, Illinois. It was an all out, fun-filled, friendly war, fought fiercely, enthusiastically, and with every intention of winning. It took place in the winter of 1927-'28 or 1928-'29.

It snowed a lot that year. One snow had hardly melted when another would fall, supplying us with plenty of ammunition. Our teacher, Mr. John P. Ward, approved of the war, but decided that only the older children, from fifth grade up, could participate.

The captains were chosen from my class, which was either the seventh or eighth grade. I have no recollection of how they were chosen, but in thinking back I recall that both had leadership skills. Neither do I remember how we were divided into the two armies, but I do recall that I was in the celebrated Casey's Army.

We agreed on a few simple rules: first, the snowballs could not be soaked in water, which would have made them too hard; second, when a soldier got hit, he became a prisoner of the other side and had to go over and fight with them; and third, the team which succeeded in capturing all of its opponents would be the winner.

Each side built a snow fort, the size, strength, and style of which depended on their ingenuity. We entered into this activity with great gusto. Our side rolled huge snowballs and stacked them together, making a wall about a foot thick which was high enough for us to stand up without our heads showing. About eight-feet long, it had two or three peepholes for spying on the enemy. We then made a large stockpile of snowballs, which we replenished from time to time as they were needed. Usually various individuals would take time out from fighting and make a few snowballs when he saw that our ammunition was in short supply. This was very dangerous, however, for the snow behind the fort soon became too packed down to use. It was necessary to leave the safety of the fort to go where the snow was soft. It required great skill to keep moving and dodging, while scooping up snow and pressing it into a ball. When one was made, it was carried to the stockpile in order to free our hands for making another. Sometimes, when both sides were low on ammunition, the captains would call a truce for a few minutes,

while each side made a fresh supply. However, if one side managed to have a good supply when the other side was low, they were in a very strategic position. They could refuse to call truce, and often capture several of the enemy as they were replenishing their stockpile.

Whenever I was taken prisoner, I found it impossible to switch loyalties and fight enthusiastically for the other side. So, as soon as possible, I would let myself be recaptured by my own army. I suspect others did the same, for there was much switching back and forth.

Our strategy was to spot one of the opposing team out of his fort, sock him with a snowball, yell, "Got-ch-ya," then dart back into our own stronghold before getting hit.

The war lasted as long as the snow held out, which may have been anywhere from two to six weeks. Neither side ever captured all of the enemy, so there was no winner. But we spent both recesses and at least half of every noon hour each day having great fun. We had vigorous exercise and lots of fresh air. We learned teamwork, cooperation, loyalty, and enthusiasm. When it was time to go inside, we could do our schoolwork much more efficiently. I think I could say that both sides won. Wouldn't you agree?

III Starting Out in the Thirties

STARTING OUT IN THE THIRTIES

America had experienced depressions before—notably in the 1830s, the 1870s, and the 1890s—but the Great Depression of the 1930s was truly a national calamity. After the stock market crashed in October 1929, prices fell, unemployment soared, thousands of banks closed, and countless businesses declined or went bankrupt.

There were over eight million unemployed workers in 1931, and that figure continued to rise until one quarter of the workforce was without a job. By 1932, when Roosevelt was elected, masses of desperate people were imploring the federal government for help, and the homeless and hungry were apparent in every American city. Rural areas were hit hard, too, as the national agricultural income dropped that year to one half of what it had been in 1929, and mortgage foreclosures reached an all-time high.

The Depression was an especially hard time to begin married life, for young adults had little or no financial reserves to fall back on, and their anxiety about the future made it hard for them to start a family or make long-term plans. But countless young couples persevered anyway, and the memoirs in this section record some of their struggles.

Marie Freesmeyer's "A Meager Beginning" tells the ironic story of a young couple for whom 1929 was "a romantic year" that seemed like "an ideal time for marriage," but they were soon immersed in the hard times that eventually drove them off the farm. Rosemary Strow's memoir is a similar account, although it starts in the midst of the Depression. She chronicles the hard work and stress of that period, but like so many couples that lived in the 1930s, she and her husband almost sixty years later wouldn't trade their experience together in that memorable decade. It was, after all, a special time in their lives. The same point is made by Helen E. Rilling in her account of "'Farm Wifery' in the Thirties and Forties."

Faced with a small income, many people had to strike out in new directions in order to prosper during the Depression. Elsa E. Schmidt recounts in some detail the launching of a poultry business that helped her and her husband make it on the farm.

Two of the memoirs focus on nonfarm businesses. Louise Parker Simms recalls with some pride the effort she and her husband made to start an ice cream store in Abingdon, and Catherine Gerrib depicts the opening and operation of a small movie theatre in Georgetown. Both businesses did well and survived the Depression.

The memoir by Robert C. Richards is replete with details about living expenses as he recalls "Courtship and Marriage in the Early Thirties." A worker in a boiler factory in Kewanee, he knew what it was like to lose his job because of the hard times and to have to relocate in order to find employment. He finally combined factory work with the operation of a small farm at Neponset, and that allowed the family to get along.

Perhaps the most severe struggle depicted in these memoirs is the closing item, "Married Life at the End of the Depression," by Myrtle Pierson. She and her husband Lyle faced poverty, illness, unemployment, and much else—including rat-infested living quarters—in a truly heroic effort to get established and start a family. Ending as it does with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the memoir shows too that another crisis—America's coming involvement in World War II—played a big role in bringing the hard times to an end.

All of these accounts remind us of how deeply the Depression marked the generation of people who were young adults then. For the rest of their lives they had confidence in their ability to cope. They were survivors of what one historian has called "the desperate years."

John E. Hallwas

EARLY MARRIED LIFE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Rosemary Strow

It was August 25th, 1934, a warm, clear, and sunshiny day. I was excited as any seventeen-year-old could possibly be, for on this day I was to become the wife of Claude Strow, a neighbor boy whom I had met the year before. My father went with us to the courthouse to get our marriage license and we barely made it before the courthouse closed, with only ten minutes to spare. For our wedding, our guest list was small: my father, Claude's nephew and his wife, and the boy who drove us to town in his car. We didn't have a church wedding, but instead were married in a parsonage.

My mother and a neighbor lady cooked a wonderful chicken dinner with all of the trimmings for us. We also had a wedding cake which had been baked at home for our small wedding party. It was a plain cake without any decorations to celebrate our day. After dinner, we went to Claude's parents to stay until we could find employment and a house. We stayed there until fall when corn husking began and Claude went to Metcalf, Illinois, to husk corn for a fellow he had worked for before. I went back to Hume, Illinois, to work in the cafe where I had worked before. In December, we returned to Claude's parents and again started looking for steady employment. In those days, jobs couldn't even be bought. Finally, after some time, Claude found employment with a farmer on a grain and livestock farm.

We were eventually able to move into a three-room home with no electricity or plumbing, but we were proud to finally have a home to call our own. We had a few pieces of furniture, which consisted of a three-piece bedroom suite, a leather davenport, two small end tables, a cabinet, a three-foot-square drop leaf table, and four chairs. We cooked on a coal cook stove and heated our home with a small pot belly stove. We worked three weeks to pay our $15 a month payment for our furniture, and the fourth bought groceries, as well as the money order and stamp to mail our payment. Our first furniture payment was lost in the mail; thank goodness the mail carrier had told me to keep the receipt.

Our first Christmas was celebrated at home with my mother's sister and her family. My aunt brought me a pink depression glass dish, which I gave to our youngest daughter when it was fifty years old. I hope she always remembers what it meant to me to receive that gift in the midst of hard times.

It was three years into our marriage before we had our first car, so grocery needs were met by canning vegetables from our garden and from a man who had turned an old school bus into a grocery store. Occasionally we bought leghorn roosters from Claude's employer, two for 25¢. We paid our bills when they came due, and if we had any money left, I would buy a Clark candy bar. They were delicious.

Laundry was a big task. I washed clothes twice a week on a washboard and in a tub of hot water which had been heated in a large black butchering kettle. Ironing was done with the flat irons heated on the kitchen stove. Since we didn't have an ironing board, I laid a sheet on my kitchen table and ironed. Usually washing and ironing was done the same day.

Each morning we trimmed the wicks and cleaned the globes on the lamps before we filled them with kerosene for the day. Kerosene was 10¢ a gallon, so it was an important expenditure, and again, we purchased it from Claude's employer.

Our first car was an old Chevy which a car dealer brought to us. He said we could pay for it when we could. Well, fifty dollars wasn't much, but we didn't have it at the time. And we had to have the car. Much later, we were finally able to pay for it.

I remember one evening I was out of lard to fry eggs for breakfast and Claude wouldn't go to his employer to borrow a cup of lard until the grocery man came the next morning. My

husband was a proud man and would not accept handouts. I was pregnant and didn't know enough to poach eggs, so I just sat down and cried. After I had cried for awhile, a car pulled up in front of our house. It was the couple Claude had husked corn for, with a three-gallon jar of lard. They brought it, thinking we might have chickens to fry, not knowing I needed to fry eggs first. I believe we must have had a guardian angel.

On Decoration Day in May 1935, I was taken to my bed for two weeks with kidney poison. Even though we still had no money, the doctor continued to come to the house to see me two times a day for awhile, as doctors did in those days.

August 16, 1935, was a happy day for us. I delivered a little baby girl and named her Joyce Ann. Claude's employer's wife, Nora, was with me at the time of the birth. She was a sweet lady with a lot of good advice. On August 30, 1937, we had our second child, a son, and named him Claude Robert.

Our clothing needs, which were few, came from a Chicago mail order catalog. Claude's shoes were $1.99 and his overalls were $1.49. I purchased yard material and sewed for my little girl and myself on an old treadle Singer sewing machine that was given to me by my grandmothers.

We worked for the same couple until they retired and their son, who had been employed at the University of Illinois, came to take care of the farm. At that time, we moved into Indiana just across the state line for two years, and then we moved back to Edgar County in Illinois. We have been here ever since, farming for ourselves.

We have lived a good life and raised three girls and two boys. We now have fourteen grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

At this time, I am 75 and Claude is 82. We have been married 58 years, and we wouldn't trade any part of the life we have shared together—even the hard years during the Depression.

A MEAGER BEGINNING

Marie Freesmeyer

At a later date folk might say that 1929 was a bad year for a couple to set sail on the sea of matrimony because they remember it as the year the stock market crashed and the beginning of those Depression years. But for a couple in their twenties, who had been "keeping company" for four years, it was a romantic year and an ideal time for marriage.

Frank had rented his parents' farm that spring and I had completed my fourth term teaching in a rural school. We chose July as the most convenient month for our wedding; therefore, we were married and busy getting settled into our new way of life when we heard the news of the stock market crash in New York. For us, that catastrophe was as far removed as Timbuktu and of no more concern. In fact, the wave of economic difficulties triggered by that event did not reach Calhoun County until two years later.

The farm on which we lived had a small orchard, a few small fields for raising corn and hay, and large areas of rough land used for pastures. Frank also worked for neighboring farmers who had larger orchards. I continued to teach a country school near our home for two terms after our marriage. When I refused to sign a contract for another term, I was thinking only of my plans for a family and not what the future might have in store for us.

We knew from reading the St. Louis paper that the economy was precarious. We also knew that the price we received for anything we sold was declining. But we were young and healthy and we had a small "nest-egg" in the bank, so we could see no cause for worry.

Since I no longer had the education of forty or more pupils on my mind, I became just a frugal farmer's wife—pregnant and proud. My husband prepared a large plot for a garden and a larger one for a truck patch so that we might have

our own fresh vegetables from early spring until late fall. Too, with suitable growing conditions, there would be plenty for canning and storing for the winter months. I was able to gather and can almost every type of fruit—either tame or wild—to such an extent that buying mason jars became one of our chief investments.

My parents gave me a Singer sewing machine which I put in a west window, making it hum nearly every afternoon. I still can see the two calico maternity dresses which I made and wore on alternate weeks. Thank goodness they had reversible, wrap-around front panels. From yards and yards of flannelette and batiste I made all the baby garments and embroidered them at night while we listened to our battery radio. (I remember Kate Smith's deep clear voice as she sang "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain.") Hemming all those diapers made from bird-eye material was no small job. I can't say, as many of my peers can, that I nearly broke my back over the washboard. My parents, who lived only three miles from us, had electricity, so they insisted that I bring the laundry there and use their electric washing machine.

My husband worked long hours pruning and spraying the orchard; planting, tilling, and shucking corn; cutting and putting up hay; and sawing, chopping, and splitting wood for fuel. His share of the income from the apple crop was not sufficient to cover the cost of spray materials and harvesting. The money for purchasing seed, chemicals for spraying, and other farming expenses had to be taken from our dwindling bank account. However, it was just as well that we did use our savings because the Hamburg Bank closed its doors in 1931, wiping out everyone's savings. After that it was nip and tuck, make do or do without.

In the fall, Frank worked for farmers with large orchards, sometimes as a picker, but more often he took truckloads of the fruit to St. Louis or Chicago. In these cities, he parked the truck along with many others in a space called "The Farmers' Market" or as they called it, "The Bull Pen." Parked there for two or more days, he sold the apples bushel by bushel for whatever he could get for them.

We always managed to find enough to eat, but it was common food which was obtained by our own efforts. We had our own meat, milk, and eggs, supplemented by the home-grown vegetables and fruit. The surplus of these commodities was traded for staples such as sugar, coffee, flour, and spices.

In 1932, the doctor charged the hard-to-come-by sum of $25 for prior consultation and driving twenty miles to deliver our baby daughter. He probably had to wait for his money until we sold a calf or hog.

I remember the attractive bassinet we made in preparation for our baby. My husband made a frame from scraps of wood he found in the shed. He put casters on the legs and attached our rectangular clothes basket securely to the top. I lined the basket with flannelette and made a skirt of printed batiste with ruffles extended to the floor. With a fluffy pillow made from Mother's endless supply of chicken feathers, we had a comfortable and convenient bed for our baby.

Cod-liver oil and a few yards of material were about the only extra expense we had for that baby or our other one. They were given tomato juice instead of orange juice and their baby food was made by pressing vegetables and fruit through a sieve—no canned baby food and disposable diapers in those days.

Something that hurt us, as well as all those living in rural areas of Illinois and surrounding states, as bad or worse than the Depression was the terrible drought that occurred each summer during the early Thirties. Each year the hot days prevailed from the first of June, with the wind and clouds bringing nothing but dust. By the first of August, the cornstalks drooped, and they were bare of anything that might become ears of corn; the garden which had produced a few early vegetables was now only rows of parched plants rattling in the wind. Dust

from as far away as Kansas and Oklahoma settled on the window sills and furniture. The heat was intense. We didn't lack for water, but many folk did.

The hot summers and severe droughts of the Thirties made everything we worked for come to naught. The corn produced only nubbins; the apples were of inferior quality; the potatoes were scarce and small; only a few vegetables matured; even the pastures became so dry that our supply of milk dwindled. One such year wouldn't have been so bad, but, for a time, each summer seemed to be hotter and drier than the preceding one.

Meager times during the Thirties were endured chiefly through optimism: each year we thought the next one would be better. But the Depression went on and on. There was little demand for farm produce, especially apples, which we sold at almost give-away prices. It became imperative that we find additional income to live on, so in 1935 we hired a girl for five dollars a week to do the housework and take care of our two small children and I resumed my career as a teacher. Thus, we lived for the next four years.

By 1938, my husband, like many other farmers who rented, gave up the idea that one could make a living that way at that time. I found a school in Jersey County to teach at for the coming term, and Frank obtained work at one of the elevators in Jerseyville.

Thus, Frank and I did not realize our early hopes. It was a meager beginning for us. But we survived the hard times and kept on going.

"FARM WIFERY" IN THE THIRTIES AND FORTIES

Helen E. Rilling

In the late Twenties, the farm depression had sent our family to St. Louis in search of work. After a few years we returned to farm again. I attended high school at Waverly, and by the time of graduation in 1932 I knew life would be best as the wife of a farmer.

My husband and I started out in eastern Morgan County with a few pieces of furniture given to us by family and friends. My husband was a hired hand. His salary was $21 a month from March 1st until the corn was shucked and in the crib. The man we worked for gave us a cow to milk, provided one fat hog to butcher, and fed some chickens for us. We had to grow a garden and preserve food for the months with no paychecks.

One winter, when times were growing even worse, we burned corn cobs, corn damaged by the drought, and shale given away at the coal mines for heat and cooking. Our car, a 1928 Ford, was put up on concrete blocks all winter. Trips to the nearest town, Alexander, were by horse and wagon, and those were taken only once a month. For entertainment, we walked across the fields to a neighbor's house to play cards.

The year the banks closed was difficult for everyone. Our boss had a few head of calves he sold to another farmer who had some cash at home. He divided the money with us. Country people were generous and helped each other.

The next year was better and we bought a small kerosene burning cookstove. It kept the house cool in summer, but in winter a coal-burning cookstove and heaters were a must in houses with no storm windows or doors. Bedrooms had no heat. Double blankets and quilts were piled high to keep warm at night.

A few years later, in 1937, we were lucky to find a farm to rent. A brother-in-law, who was a machinery dealer, loaned us the horses to use that were traded in on Allis Chalmers

tractors and other machinery. These were not the best horses, and we had many runaways and balky mules to contend with.

There we were—owners of a few pieces of furniture, a car, and one cow given to us by my father. But, what an adventure that was, to gradually build up our livestock, machinery, cattle, and household items. We soon had hogs, cattle, sheep, and even a few goats. There was a brooder house filled with fluffy yellow chicks, and we had a few guinea hens to keep varmints and crows away with their incessant cackling.

After the dark days of World War II descended upon America, we were blessed with the arrival of two babies. My husband wasn't called for military duty, but he faced long days of hard labor in the fields. Farm help was hard to come by, so I was designated the number-one helper. That meant milking when field work lasted into the dark night. I soon learned how to feed chickens, gather eggs, feed the livestock, and pump water while babies napped.

One spring during the birth of multiple pig litters, we took shifts allowing the large number of baby pigs to take turns at nursing. Many a night in the shadowy barn by a flickering lantern hung high on the wall I fell asleep, leaning against the warm body of a mother sow. I became a pro at cleaning pig pens, barn stalls, and hen houses. I mastered driving tractors and could run all the machinery except the combine and corn picker. All in all I earned a master's degree in "Farm Wifery."

One fall day my husband and I were riding across the pasture back to the barn on a frame wagon filled with green corn we had cut to feed the cows. Suddenly, the wagon wheel hit a ditch and flipped the entire wagon load over on top of me. I can still see the horrified look on my husband's face when he dug through the stalks and found me quite alive.

Life on a farm in the Thirties and Forties was indeed hard work. One spring we sheared our own sheep with a hand-cranked machine. I turned the crank and my husband sheared. Those poor animals had more than a few bad nicks in their skin, but we felt proud of a hard job well done. Afterward we collapsed under a shade tree, resting to the bleating of the lambs trying to recognize their newly sheared mother ewes.

We survived the use of coupons during the war by trading shoe coupons to my sister in St. Louis for sugar coupons, which we needed to use in canning and preserving. Our food was plentiful. A large garden; cows to produce milk, butter, cream, and cottage cheese; fruit trees filled with cherries, apricots, and apples; and a big strawberry patch kept the cupboards and cellar filled. I made homemade soap from surplus grease and lye to wash the many dirty overalls and blue chambray shirts.

Gradually, we acquired our own tractor, combine, and other machinery. We furnished our home with new pieces a few at a time. After the war ended and electric lines reached our farm, we had a modern refrigerator and television. Yellow school busses began to crawl along our country roads and the one-room schools closed their doors. Our lives improved.

Yet our memories of those earlier years are not filled only with the hard struggles of the Depression and the war, but with the tranquil days on the farm as well. There was time for friends and leisure back then, and for love and merriment too.

STRUGGLING TO MAKE IT WITH POULTRY

Elsa E. Schmidt

My husband and I were married in October 1933 at Lenzburg, Illinois. I had been clerking in my father's general merchandise store since high school graduation in 1926. My only brother graduated from high school in 1930 and went on to college, graduating in three years. It was tough going for Dad and me to keep him there during those three years.

My brother didn't teach the first year after college graduation, as he was only twenty, so he clerked for my dad. The next year he was principal of Lenzburg grade school. Later he became the high school principal at Lenzburg.

Now it was my time. I had been going with Walt, a farmer's only child, for five years. He farmed in a small way, using horses for power, keeping four or five cows to milk, and raising hogs and chickens. He was a high school graduate and had hoped to go on to college, but his father died and there was no money for school, so he stayed on the farm and farmed. In 1933, his mother went to work as a housekeeper. This left Walt alone, and we decided to marry despite bank failures and the Depression.

Walt's great grandfather had built the family house in about 1850. He, his mother, and his dad moved in when he was three years old, after his grandfather died. Walter's father had worked in the mines and farmed until he had become too ill with TB. Walt and his mother had just recently had three rooms torn off the west side of the house, which covered a twelve foot-deep beer cellar. It had to be filled in. The newer part of the house had been home and store, with two rooms down and two rooms up, and a staircase between. Walt and I remodeled the kitchen and one bedroom.

My husband had no car, but he had a bicycle. My dad had given us a second-hand Ford Coupe when we married, so we didn't have to walk or use a buggy and horse to get to town. The roads were bad, and often I had to walk three miles to get to Sunday School. I also continued to teach and I delivered whipping cream to customers in Lenzburg.

I had helped dig and store potatoes. We had hens that were laying, and some had stolen nests and hatched out about fifty chicks. These became part of our diet, and Walt also shot some rabbits. We had small pigs, but not enough feed and corn, so we butchered them when they were about 100 pounds and sold sausage and hams to customers. Mother and I canned vegetables during the summer.

I had bought a gasoline engine wringer washer before we married. Dad sold them and he needed one to demonstrate at picnics. I also bought a gasoline iron, a bedroom suite, a couch, and kitchen supplies. I had an insurance policy, which had a cash value of $727, so I turned it in, after giving a good excuse for doing so (getting married and the banks being closed). We made that money go far.

I learned to milk cows. We had a separator, so we had cream to sell. I also made butter with a small hand churn.

In the spring, we had a large garden, which I spaded and took care of. Walt continued to farm until the second year, when he sold the horses and bought a garden tractor and tried to farm 20 acres with that for awhile. He was clerking for my dad by that time (for $10 a week), but didn't like that and finally bought a larger tractor and tools and farmed full-time with more ground.

I washed in the summer kitchen, which we moved closer to the well and cistern. Water was pumped by hand and packed by bucket to the boiler to heat on a coal range. For washing, I used homemade soap, which my husband and I made, cooking it in a large kettle outdoors. In those days, I soaked all the wash the night before, rubbing the dirty spots, and the next day I washed in a washer with hot water. Boiling all the white clothes in a boiler on the range, I took them out of the boiler with a wash stick, wringing them after washing in the machine, then putting them in rinsing water, then in bluing water. I had a wash bench that held three tubs. Finally, I hung them outdoors to dry.

We went into the poultry business by getting 300 baby chicks every three months. We built a new brooder house with a fuel oil brooder. Also, we got a range shelter with a wire floor through which the manure fell, and the shelter was moved after each batch of chickens. It had wire sides with large lift up doors

to put down for protection. Besides their food and water, we fed skim milk to them from the separator. We killed and dressed the fryers as they reached three pounds and delivered them to customers in adjoining towns. I also sold to several restaurants. I used our Ford Coupe to deliver the fryers three days a week, about 50 a week. We also sold eggs.

Walt and I caught ones to be dressed the evening before, and we put them in a coop on the wheelbarrow. I heated the water in kettles on the coal oil range. When it was hot, I put it in a galvanized bucket, added a little cold water, and carried it outdoors to where I was to work. I immersed the chicken, which I had previously killed by cutting off its head with a large knife by putting its head between two nails on a stump. I also scalded the legs. I used a piece of binder twine to tie the legs together, then hung the chicken on a nail on a piece of wood nailed to a large tree. I did three or four at a time. With a big box under them, I pulled of the feathers. Later we used chore girl to take off the pin feathers. In the winter, we did this in the garage.

The drawing of the chickens was done in the kitchen. I only made one insertion, pulling all entrails through to rear. Then I cleaned the gizzard and washed the chicken, hanging it to dry and cutting off the feet. Some customers wanted the feet; some didn't. With so many, I made chicken soup from the feet. The chickens were wrapped for delivery. Of course I had to clean up myself and my kitchen before I could deliver the chickens. We got 50¢ a pound or more for the chickens. We also had to report sales and sales tax.

I canned everything I could, cold packed, and used a pressure cooker. I also fried down meat, did my own sewing, cut the grass, and carried out ashes from the stoves. We also had a coal heater in the living room.

Our toilet was behind the washhouse, where we built a new combination toilet, wood shed, and coal shed. I was used to a house that was centrally heated, with a bathroom and full basement, plus water indoors and electricity. But love came first. We did have a battery radio, gasoline lights, a lantern, and telephone.

We struggled hard in those years, but we made it.

GETTING STARTED IN ICE CREAM

Louise Parker Simms

James O. Simms and I were married on October 4, 1930. Our engagement had been long because we wanted to have some money saved before we married. Luckily, both of us had jobs. "Shorty" (as he was called by his coworkers and friends) worked at Bond Dairy, and I worked in the office of American Sanitary Manufacturing company—better known locally, in Abingdon, as "The Brass Factory."

Each of us had a savings account which we planned to use when we got married. However, things don't always work out as planned.

During the period of our engagement, we saw the only bank in town close, and our money (even our checking accounts) were unavailable to us. After some time, the bank was reorganized and reopened, but we had to sign a waiver giving up twenty-five percent of the amount we had in the bank when it closed.

We later decided it would be safer to buy something we could use when we set up housekeeping rather than risk losing cash in a bank account again. So I bought a set of "good" dishes and Shorty bought a bedroom suite, which he put in my bedroom in my parents' home, where I lived.

Bond Dairy, like many other businesses, experienced hard times and could not produce enough cash to pay their employees. Shorty kept on working for a while but was finally forced to return to his parents' farm in southeastern Illinois.

George Bond gave him a note for the $364 in wages owed to him. Bond planned to pay the note when he received the money from the sale of his business, which he hoped would be in the near future. This he eventually did, and at the same time he called Shorty back so he would have a job with the new owner—which turned out to be College City Dairy in Galesburg.

All processing operations were moved to the Galesburg plant. The Abingdon dairy became a buying station for milk and cream and a retail outlet for College City's finished products. Shorty's job included the necessary trucking between Abingdon and Galesburg. And he had a regular paycheck coming in—which was great!

We were married with the help of Paul and Miriam Snyder—friends who had a car (which we didn't have). They took us to the parsonage of the Christian Church in Galesburg where Reverand S. H. Zendt made us husband and wife. Church weddings were the exception rather than the rule in those days because few people had the money to spend on a big wedding.

We lived with my parents at 401 East Martin Street and paid rent for our bedroom and half of the grocery bill.

After a few months we could see that Shorty's job was not very secure since this arrangement did not seem to be very profitable for the owners. We decided to strike out on our own by opening an ice cream store. We rented a small building (formerly a grocery store) just east of the Methodist Church on West Latimer Street.

We were able to pay cash for the ice cream freezer and cabinets (both of which used salt and ice for the refrigerant) and also got four unpainted tables with chairs from Sears-Roebuck. Then we painted the furniture, hung curtains at the windows—and we had us an ice cream parlor!

We opened on May 2, 1931, and did a good business that summer, featuring two-dip cones of homemade ice cream for a nickel. I kept my office job and worked at our store in the evenings and on weekends.

We realized the ice cream business alone would not sustain us through the winter, so when we learned that Bond Dairy was going to close, we rented the building and signed a contract to buy the fixtures and equipment.

We operated both places the remainder of the summer, and when fall arrived, we closed the little store and moved to the building on Martin Street.

The east room in the front of the building was our retail room. The west room we made into a "living" room for us (in one corner), with the addition of a pot-bellied stove, a linoleum rug, a wicker davenport, and a rocker from Sears-Roebuck. We also bought a used library table.

An open window about two feet square was made in the wall connecting the two front rooms, providing a visual connection with the retail room when we were in our living room between customers on cold winter nights. We built a kitchen about the size of a walk-in closet and equipped it with a three burner kerosene stove and removable oven, and a refrigerator.

We bought a used Chevrolet Coupe (with a rumble seat) and started a milk route with about a half dozen customers, whom we charged 6¢ a quart for unpasteurized milk. But things didn't go very well. The problem was that we sold on credit, expecting each customer to pay at the end of every month. But many people were without jobs during these years of the Great Depression, so we were forced to carry their accounts more than a month, and we did not have the capital to do this. The number of our customers grew but our profits did not.

I kept working, and often my paycheck went into our store account to keep the place going.

By the time fall arrived, we had bought a small panel truck because we were wholesaling milk to local grocery stores, ice cream parlors, and restaurants. (At least this wholesale business was cash.) We also were hauling pasteurized milk from Meadow Gold Dairy in Galesburg. Some of our retail route customers were now on "relief" (what we now know as public

aid), and the government ruled that these customers had to have only pasteurized milk.

By the summer of 1934 we had decided that Illinois Route 41, which was two blocks west of Main Street, would be a good location because it was getting the most traffic through town, as well as a lot of local traffic. We took the plunge and bought a house on the corner of Jackson and Monroe (Route 41) Streets. We paid one hundred dollars down and monthly payments of fifty dollars. We bought it from my boss, H. C. Bulkeley, and he knew very well we could not afford to pay more!

There were three men on our milk route who were carpenters and brick masons. Through no fault of their own they had been unable to pay their milk bills for some time because of lack of work. They were Ernest Roberson, Ray Heikes, and Harry Hocker. We hired them to build a small store onto the northwest corner of our house, facing the highway on the west. Our house faced Jackson Street on the south so it did not spoil the looks of our house. The store portion was built of used brick to match our brick house.

At the end of every week we paid each man $10 in cash. The balance of what we owed them was applied against their milk bill. $10 bought much more in 1934 than it does today, and the men gladly agreed to this arrangement.

During the winter of 1934-1935, we continued only our retail and wholesale milk routes while the interior of our ice cream and dairy store was being finished.

In the spring of 1935, we opened Simms Homemade Ice Cream Store at our new location. We operated it only through the summer until we added two kinds of sandwiches, coffee, donuts, and homemade pie to our menu, as the result of having so many requests for lunch items. We did well at that location.

The first time we were able to buy a car (besides the truck we used for business) was in 1937, when we purchased a new two-door Pontiac for $833 in cash. We were certainly proud of that car—and proud of doing well enough to be able to afford it. We had launched a successful business in the middle of the Great Depression.

OUR THEATRE BUSINESS IN THE THIRTIES

Catherine Gerrib

Those of us who lived during the Depression and were able to graduate from high school were very fortunate. My family lived in Westville, a small town in east central Illinois near the Indiana border. My sister and I walked about three miles both morning and evening to Westville High School. There were no school buses; everyone walked.

I graduated in 1931 and was lucky to have a friend who drove to Danville to work in a cafeteria and was able to help my sister and me get a job in the cafeteria too. We worked for our meals and little pay. We also worked serving various business clubs for special dinners held there. All of us who served them were able to split the tips. We looked forward to that because we were able to make a little extra money; of course, there were a lot of dishes to wash afterward! Our parents stressed one thing about working. Take any job that you can get—*as long as it is honest and honorable*. We passed that on to our children.

While in high school I started dating a wonderful young man who became my husband in 1934. His father had a movie theatre in Westville. In fact, my husband had been born in the back of the theatre where they had living quarters. All of his growing up years were spent working, playing, and living in the theatre. As he grew older he was taught to run the machines long before sound was on the film. In 1932, his father bought an old building in Georgetown, a town about six miles south of Westville, tore down the building, and built the Georgetown

Theatre. It opened in November of 1933. His folks offered me a job in the ticket office and, of course, I accepted.

In May 1934 we were married. We both had been saving what little bit we could for our furniture. When the folks in Georgetown found out we were married, a lot of young people came to the show and kept yelling, "Free show!" My father-in-law said, "Let them in." We had 468 seats in the theatre, and we let over 900 people in free that night. I never knew how the word spread so fast.

We rented a nice house in Georgetown for $12 a month. It was a cozy home with five rooms and a fireplace. We had a coal stove in the dining room for heat. My kitchen stove was a kerosene range. I had a nice ice box, an electric washing machine, and a handy kitchen. We started with living room furniture, then bedroom furniture, and finally the kitchen. Our salary at the show was $25 a week for the two of us. With careful planning, we could handle it. I also allowed $3 per week for groceries, and we ate well.

When first opening the theatre, we charged 20¢ for adults and 10¢ for children. When children became twelve years old, we charged full fare for them. You would never believe how many twelve year old kids there were in Georgetown. It did not take too long to learn who had a birthday. We also let all the aldermen and their families in free; it helped to do extra little favors now and then.

The movies were rented from a place in Chicago. They were brought down by truck three times a week. Our show schedule was Sunday-Monday, Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday, and Friday-Saturday. At times there would be a checker sent in. He would check the first and last ticket each evening. Besides paying to rent the film, we would also pay a percent of the income on particular films—such as *Gone With the Wind*, for instance. All other times we hired a boy to take tickets and tear them up and deposit them in a ticket chopper. He worked for $3 a week—and that was big money then for a boy in school.

We worked every night from 6:00 p.m. until 11:30 or later, depending upon how long the show lasted and when the last person came in. We started on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. and worked late. We did not have a vacation at any time. The one big thing we did get to do was attend the World's Fair in Chicago in 1934 or 1935. In about 1937, we built an apartment on the second floor of the theatre, so it became our home.

We used to have very good business at the theatre. Our weekends were the best. At that time farmers used to come in town on Saturday evening to shop. We would have a line of people waiting to get in for the second show. It was not unusual to have about one full house and a half again. During the week, the drawing cards were the serials and Westerns.

To have a show open on Sunday was unheard of until we opened up. It was not accepted well at first. There were a few people who would cross the street to keep from walking in front of the show. It was called, by a few, the "Devil's playhouse." But we continued to be friendly to people, and we made many friends. At Christmas time we always had a free show for the children, plus apples and some candy. That continued until our insurance company said that unless we charged a fee the children would not be covered in case of fire, so we had to stop that. We tried many things as time went by. We bought a popcorn machine and had a candy case in the lobby. Candy bars were 5¢ and popcorn was 10¢ and 15¢ per box. We could get kids to work for about $3 a week.

The work in a theatre did not stop at just showing the movie. The place had to be swept out every night after the people left. The restrooms had to be cleaned, and about every two months the theatre was scrubbed out from back to front. The show was heated by a coal furnace which took a lot of work. There was no air conditioning then, and the show was cooled by a large attic fan which had to be turned on in the early afternoon in order to make it halfway comfortable by evening.

We were able to make a living in the theatre until television came in. Although business declined then, and we turned to other things, I have many good memories of our early years at the Georgetown Theatre.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN THE EARLY THIRTIES

Robert C. Richards Sr.

I first started to dance when my sister, Genevieve, and I went to a dance at the Kewanee Odd Fellows Hall. After that, I went to quite a few dances in neighboring counties. A barn was built at Camp Grove, and its owner decided to hold a dance in the hayloft. It was common to do that when a new barn was built years ago. So many people came to that dance that the owner decided to hold a dance every Tuesday night. In the summer of 1930, I started to go there with my friend, Clarence Mear.

In August of that year, I saw a beautiful girl, Marcella Routh, at one of those dances. I was not normally a shy person, but I waited until they had a tag dance. That's when a man tagged the fellow dancing with a girl on the shoulder, and then he could dance with that girl. Marcella and I danced several dances after that, and she proved to be my future wife.

Marcella went to high school in Chillicothe and lived with a doctor's family. I wrote letters to her in the fall of 1930 and the following winter and spring. In June, we started to date, and we went to various shows and dances. Show tickets cost 15¢ to 25¢ then, and dance tickets for a couple were anywhere from 40¢ to a dollar. Marcella graduated from high school in 1932, and in November of that year I got down on one knee and proposed. She said "yes," but then I had to ask the consent of her father, Charles Routh. He gave his consent, but he was very concerned about the Great Depression that had come along and was getting worse. Farmers, workers, and businesses were all having problems, and the future did not look too bright.

We made plans to be married on Valentine's Day of 1933, but Marcella's two sisters, Mildred and Helen, worked at a Montgomery Ward store in Chicago and were unable to get off work, so the date was changed to Saturday, February 18.

After purchasing the engagement ring and wedding band, I had $50 left to buy flowers, pay the priest, and furnish refreshments for the wedding reception. I borrowed my friend's 1931 Pontiac to pick up Marcella and her sister Helen, who was the bridesmaid. My brother, Melvin, was the best man. Marcella's home was on a farm thirty-one miles away from Neponset. Her brother followed us in another car, with Marcella's parents and her brother Leo. We stopped at Park's Greenhouse in Kewanee to pick up the flowers, and then went to my grandparents' home, where all the relatives had arranged to meet. On the way I hit a large spot of ice and spun around. Richard, in the other car, thought I did it on purpose, so he also hit the ice and spun around. He thought it was fun, but it made his mother very upset.

Just before 8:00 p.m., we all went to the Visitation Rectory, where Father Burke was waiting to perform the ceremony. Afterward, the wedding party proceeded to Neponset, to my father and mother's home, where we had the wedding reception.

At that time, people could not afford regular wedding cards but wrote their congratulations and names on pieces of paper. Instead of presents, they gave us a grocery shower. My sisters, my parents, and Marcella's parents furnished the food. I furnished the refreshments: forty-eight quarts of home brew beer, made by my Uncle Clarence; one gallon of Steve's Best Whiskey, which was $2; and a gallon of 186 proof alcohol, which was $2.50. I forgot to cut it to 93 proof, with water, and some

people got drunk. My two brothers-in-law drank too much of the potent alcohol, and we had to go hunt for them. One had walked two miles away before we found him. We gave them lots of coffee and they soon felt better.

We rented a two-room apartment in Kewanee. The heat, light, and water were all furnished for $2.50 a week. There were five apartments in that house and ten people to use the one bathroom. On Monday I would light the laundry stove in the basement so Marcella could heat the water to do the week's washing. The bed bugs were rampant in the house, and they bit Marcella but, for some reason, did not bother me.

Marcella kept a record of our budget during the first week we were married. My weekly pay at the Kewanee Boiler Company was $5.37, but for the year we eventually made $607. The Depression was very bad by then, and we had to struggle to make ends meet. Coffee was 19¢ a pound, milk 5¢ a pint, eggs 12¢ a dozen, and bread 5¢ a loaf. We bought a Philco Table Model Radio, so we had to pay 50¢ a month extra for electricity. We went to church and put 10¢ in the basket, and we went to ball games twice a week and donated 20¢. Things were very bad when President Roosevelt closed the banks on March 6, 1933. Since I had about $7, we were the only ones in that house who could pay their rent for that week.

For entertainment, we played cards, such as poker and rummy, for matches. We had two good friends, Fred and Shirley Klein, that we chummed with, going to ball games, shows, band concerts, and lots of free places. We did a lot of walking then, as gas cost a dollar for seven gallons.

During that period, many hardships were taking place. Farmers lost their farms, stores went bankrupt, and people went hungry. As a result, government programs started, such as the C.C.C. camps for young men, and there were co-op gardens and canning centers. Churches and the Red Cross furnished clothing for many people.

We soon moved to 217 Hollis Street, where we had a large garden with a small chicken house. Unfortunately, the chicken house caught fire from a defective brooder stove, so that put us out of the chicken business.

Worse than that, the Kewanee Boiler Company did not have any boiler sales to speak of, so I soon had no work. About eleven million others were unemployed at that time, too. Fortunately, however, my brother-in-law, Durand Hand, worked for Rozells Ice Cream Company in Peoria, so he got me a job working in the cooler there. I washed ice cream cans in near zero temperatures, but I was glad to have the job. The National Recovery Act was put into law, so I got 40¢ an hour, or $16 a week.

When we first moved to Peoria, we stayed with my sister and her husband. Then we got an apartment.

I worked at Rozells until August when Caterpillar hired me as a welder on the second shift, at 60¢ an hour. I felt pretty lucky to have the increased income.

Soon, the boiler company called me back to work, in the fall of 1934, so we returned to the Kewanee area. We eventually lived in Neponset on a seven-acre place where we had a large garden, two milk cows, and about 200 chickens. The first of our three children was born in 1935.

So, we made it after all, but it was a hard time to get started.

MARRIED LIFE AT THE END OF THE DEPRESSION

Myrtle Pierson

The tag end of the Depression was *not* a good time for people to marry. But marry we did, on November 30, 1938. The harvest was finished and we had $85 in the bank!

My fiancé had a large carbuncle on the back of his neck, and it was in the process of healing when we said our "I do"s in the Presbyterian Manse at Monticello, Illinois. Neither of us had a job, and we had spent part of our slim savings for a blanket and six dining chairs to use with the small oak table his mother generously furnished. We had also spent $6 for a very small coal heater to warm our downstairs kitchen-sitting room. Parents and friends had furnished a day bed, an oil stove for cooking, bed linens and pillows, a couple of rag rugs, and a kitchen cabinet. Our bedstead was an iron refugee from the trash heap in the pasture back of Lyle's boss's home. It graced our upstairs bedroom along with a refurbished dresser from Lyle's parents' smoke house. The bed was furnished with a straw "tick" and a feather bed. We shared a bath with the landlady.

In early winter, Lyle contracted bronchitis. With our funds shrinking alarmingly, and with $10 a month rent, we had to find a doctor. He and the grocer had to carry us on their books. Parents supplied what they could, but mine were 140 miles away, and fighting it out with the Depression themselves—Dad having to sell out his farm equipment, and Mom working night and day to keep three younger children in school and fed. Dad had part-time work in the new oil fields around Olney, and Lyle's father had a steady job on a farm near Monticello. Although I didn't know it at the time, I'm sure his parents bailed us out whenever they could. They had a couple of younger kids at home, too.

Necessity forced me to find work as a maid with a family on Monticello's one-time "Millionaire Row." I owned one pair of shoes, and Lyle owned one pair of "Sunday" shoes and a pair of two-buckle overshoes, besides his heavy work shoes. For everyday, he wore overalls and chambray shirts. I wore print dresses and cotton or rayon stockings. Neither of us had enough clothes to fill the two drawers of the dresser. I did laundry in a dishpan or the bathtub. A rope across the living area was our dryer.

From $5 a week as a hired girl on a farm, my wages jumped to $8 for a ten-hour day, plus two meals in the pantry after the family was served. I was second maid under a very pleasant first maid who had worked there for several years. We limped along on my wages, which did not allow for any frivolities like shoes, until my new husband landed work with the township road crews, clearing snow off the country roads.

In the spring, we moved to a farm near Lodge, Illinois, into a huge old house. From the luxury of a single electric light bulb, we were back to kerosene lamps. We bought an enameled wood-and-coal kitchen range from my aunt for $5, and added a little battery radio to our possessions. We could afford to splurge a little now. From $30 a month as a single hired hand, my husband now earned the handsome wage of $35. He owned a '32 V-8 Ford sedan with a leaky radiator when we were married, and I owned an old Underwood typewriter my father had given me for graduation. We began paying the doctor a little, and got the grocery bill under control. We had a couple of cows to milk now, and cream to sell occasionally. We had a huge garden which we planted full, and sold some of the produce from it.

My parents moved to a farm near DeLand, Illinois, not far from Lodge, and so my mother was near to coach me when I found myself pregnant. They gave us a second bed, which we installed in one of the great empty rooms of that once-fine old house with its ornate parlor fireplace. We got apple boxes and orange crates from the grocery and constructed odd bits of furnishings. We bought a galvanized tub and a washboard when we moved, and from somewhere came an old boiler in which to heat wash water.

Unfortunately, my husband's carbuncle was only the beginning of a long series of boils which plagued him for months. One side of his body was covered with 21 of them at one time; not little pesky things, but virulent eruptions which incapacitated him. Once more we were in debt to the doctor and the grocer.

The car broke down and Lyle took it apart, when he was able, and bit by bit put it back together.

The cistern for holding rain water was fouled and it was left to me to clean it out. A chicken fell in the well where we pumped our drinking water, and we had to use the well some fifty feet from the house. Irritated by Lyle's frequent illness, his boss fired him when the crops were in.

Our daughter was born at home on December 15, 1939. How we got through that winter is rather hazy in my memory. We couldn't have done it without the backing of our parents and other relatives. With no money for coal, we had only cobs to burn for heat. At least we had plenty of them! With a new baby, we hired a young woman to help, but even at $5 a week we had to let her go after the second week.

We were living on beans and biscuits for the most part, with some pork thrown in. I had canned a lot of tomatoes, so we did have those to help out.

While I tried to keep the baby warm and clean, Lyle went job hunting. After a really heartbreaking winter, we moved to another farm several miles away. The house there was filthy and rat infested. Getting it livable and rid of the rats took too much out of me. I had to put the baby on the bottle. The working conditions were more than my weakened husband could handle, too. Two months of it were all we could take. We rented a small house near my in-laws, and Lyle went to work with his father.

Here we kept the few hens we had collected on the farm at Lodge, and had a big garden and a good well. There was only enough milk supplied for the baby, and it came out of her grandparents' quota. By this time, we had managed to acquire shoes all around and a few luxuries like a second wash tub and another lamp. Money was still in short supply, and when the crops were in, Lyle was again without a job.

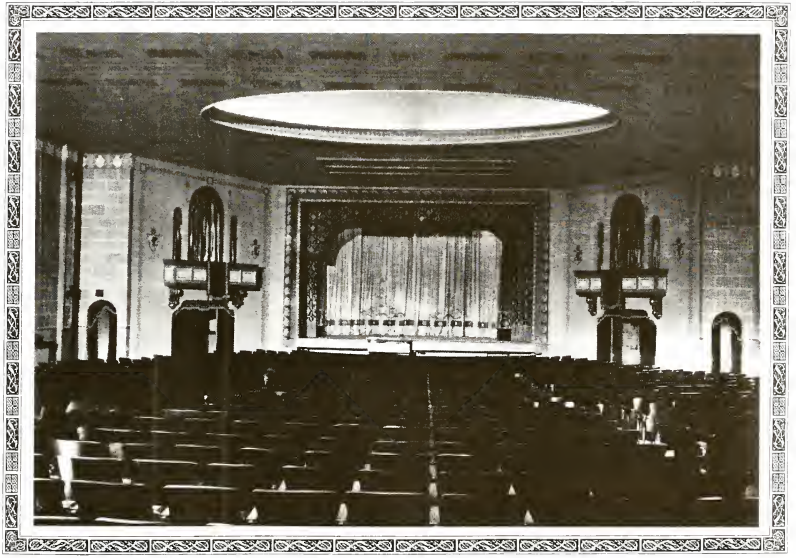
That fall, we moved again, this time to the farm home of a widowed man who allowed us two rooms in his big house in exchange for my services as housekeeper. The doll bed our daughter used as a bassinet was now outgrown, and we found a good used metal crib at the second-hand store. It had no mattress so I scrounged material to make one. I hemmed the good ends of worn sheets and blankets our mothers donated to fit it.

Then a man came by with two new mattresses on top of his car. He owned a mattress factory in Champaign, but business was slow, so he was peddling them in the countryside. The grandparents had put $5 in the baby's piggy bank. I took it and bought one of those mattresses to replace our battered straw tick. It cost $10 and our old mattress. How heavenly it was to sleep on that mattress topped with our feather bed!

The next peddler who stopped was selling sewing machines—Singers with the latest gadgets. Lyle shut his eyes and plunged. It took us most of the year to pay off that $125. We still had our hens, which our landlord graciously fed for us, but eggs brought only a few cents per dozen. We spent the winter there, while Lyle searched for work. This farmer had no need for a hired man. March came, and we moved to the estate of Robert Allerton, one of the richest men in Piatt County. In return for work as a gardener and groundskeeper, we were furnished a large seven-room house with out buildings and an enormous garden plot. We also had a place for the hens. There was a wood range in the kitchen and all the fuel we needed, a large basement with a furnace and built-in laundry tubs, running water up- and downstairs, but no bathroom.

The Ford was traded for a Plymouth, of which we were very proud. The Depression was pretty well over. Then it was December 7, 1941. Mr. Robert Allerton closed his mansion, packed up most of his treasures, and gave most of the help their notices.

Then, with our feet under us, we just kept moving on!



IV Going to the Movies

GOING TO THE MOVIES

The advent of movies and their quite amazing effect on the nation and its people must confound those born in the last four decades. Not only did these films provide wonderful entertainment but they were also promoters of morality. Youth of the 1920s, '30s, '40s, and '50s were profoundly influenced and highly entertained by the movies, first silent, then talkies; and the medium was usually a force for good.

The memoirs had very good things to say about the movies. In her delightful reminiscence, Phyllis T. Fenton described well the importance of films to her:

> I could go from the world of the humdrum to one of sheer magic . . ., escape from reality, and, through all the changes over the years, going to the movies was always a grand occasion.

D. R. Rockhill wrote that "the most exciting place in town to spend some time was the Saturday afternoon picture show." "Hollywood had given us, " explained Eleanor Jontry Brown, "escape for a few hours from the hardships of the Big Depression and the realities and sorrows of our wars." Dorothy M. Ross shared her feeling that the films "lent the ambiance found when we searched for adventure and romance, for our hopes and dreams, by stepping through those doors."

Anthony Cichoke wrote of his town's combination movie and talent night:

> These weekly movies were not just an evening of entertainment; they were an event, a happening, an integral part of the very social fiber of the community. They functioned as a combined Irish stew of community picnic, carnival, amusement park, political gathering, and all-round opportunity to reinforce traditional values of God, family, and country.

Others wrote marvelous recollections. D. R. Rockhill spoke hilariously and lovingly of attending Westerns with his grandfather. Jan Roberts wrote beautifully of being terrorized by the movies. Ruth Van Horn explained what it was like to own and operate a theatre, while Martha Graham shared the wonderful emotions engendered by her hometown theatre.

But a somber note was sounded by Eleanor Gentry Brown in comparing current films to what she so enjoyed in earlier days: "Along the way, movies have changed. Hollywood spews out movie after movie, filled with gutter language, sex, and violence. I don't watch them."

This concern with the decadence and depravity of Hollywood did not emerge as a primary theme in most of the memoirs. Instead, the recollections focused on fond memories of experiences at the movies long ago that thrilled and excited. Magnified by the exuberance of youth, filled by sweet reverie, the memoirs shared beautiful experiences centered around the exciting new medium—it, too, in its youth.

Even more, however, the writers exposited values, dreams, and behaviors of their respective eras in which the films were both significant educators and entertainers of the youth. Blemished far less by the serious breakdown of values typical in the present time, the movies reflected a social order that, at its highest levels, was the foundation of the American Dream. The films most often reflected the high-level values, positively influencing and formulating high moral purpose, and, as important, provided entertainment that lingers as joyful memories, lovely, magical interludes, in the lives of the writers.

Alfred J. Lindsey

GRANDPA AND THE SATURDAY AFTERNOON PICTURE SHOW

D. R. Rockhill

As a small boy growing up in Effingham, Illinois, in the 1930s, the most exciting place in town to spend some time was the Saturday afternoon picture show, accompanied by my Grandpa.

On one typical Saturday in the summer of 1939, the warm August sun had about reached its midpoint, when I ran to the old man dozing under the shade tree, shouting for him to wake up so we could leave for the picture show. Grandpa opened his eyes, shifted his position in the rocking chair we kept under the tree just for him, took off his hat, and carefully wiped its sweatband and then the top of his head with a faded bandana.

He removed his morning chew of Levi Garrett, replaced it with a wad of rough cut about the size of a hen's egg, adjusted his suspenders, and reached for his crutches. He rose to his feet with difficulty, pained by arthritis, or "rumatiz" as he called it, and began walking the few feet to the car, grumbling all the way about some kids always being in such a damned hurry. His complaining didn't fool me, however—not one little bit. Grandpa was as great a fan of the Saturday afternoon Westerns as I was—and each Saturday found us mounting an expedition to the matinee at the Effingham Theater.

I loved that old man. He was my hero. He was profane and sometimes careless in his personal habits, but I loved him, and I knew he loved me. Grandpa was the only honest-to-john Westerner I had ever met in my brief eight years; and he had led a fascinating life. He was born in Missouri in 1859, of Scots-Irish and Cherokee parents, and had moved to Texas at the age of fourteen to be his own man. During the next fifty years, he had worked variously as a cowhand, buffalo hunter, Indian scout for the railroad, gold prospector, oilman, gambler (he seldom discussed this), and rancher.

A lifetime of travels and adventures had provided him with a wealth of stories and tall tales which, coupled with his exceptional abilities as a spinner of yarns and his colorful language (he cussed like a muleskinner), made him a delight for any little boy. As far as I was concerned, my Grandpa was cast from the same mold as my Saturday afternoon heroes: Buck Jones, Tim McCoy, Ken Maynard, Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix, and John Wayne.

On this typical Saturday afternoon, as always, my Dad drove us to town and deposited us at the Effingham Theater. I crawled out of the car first, and Grandpa handed me a brown paper bag to carry, containing an empty half pound coffee can he used to spit tobacco juice in during the picture. Then he extended his crutches and laboriously disembarked, and Dad pulled away, promising to pick us up when the picture was over. We crossed the sidewalk, and examined the colored posters on the front of the theatre to see what pictures were showing. Each Saturday afternoon, the theatre offered a double feature, along with one or two chapters of the latest serial. At least one of the features, and frequently the serial, were Westerns. If not Westerns, they were usually action or adventure films featuring African explorers, wars and spies, or gangsters. On a rare occasion, they would feature a musical or, worse, a love story—which was sure to generate considerable negative comment from the Saturday afternoon patrons. Grandpa enjoyed, but critiqued, the Westerns; tolerated the adventure films; and complained bitterly about the others.

This Saturday they offered a mixed bill, with two chapters of a popular jungle epic, "Tim Tyler's Luck," and a rerun of a Buck Jones film. They were also showing the latest Gene Autry picture. This was unfortunate because neither Grandpa nor I appreciated any of the singing cowboys like Gene Autry or Roy Rogers; we liked our Western heroes to be two-fisted, not sissified warblers.

Grandpa had already developed an interest in Tim Tyler's adventures and was always satisfied with Buck Jones, even reruns; but I feared the worst when he saw the Gene Autry bill—and he didn't disappoint me.

"Damnation! Gene Autry! He ain't worth driving in to town to see," he mumbled, shaking his head as we bought our tickets and an enormous five cent bag of popcorn.

We entered the theatre, Grandpa still cussing under his breath about Gene Autry. We settled in our seats; the lights dimmed and the picture started. The two chapters of Tim Tyler's serial and the Buck Jones film held everyone's interest, including Grandpa's, and he made several favorable comments to that effect during the show. I joined the other little boys who had smuggled our cap guns into the theatre, repeatedly shooting at all the outlaws and wild animals.

The opening scene of the Gene Autry film flashed on the screen, with Gene riding along, singing in his nasal whine, and all the boys leaned forward in anticipation, waiting for Grandpa's opening salvo. They knew when something in a film didn't ring true, or displeased him, he would lean over and whisper an editorial comment in my ear. Unfortunately, since he was hard of hearing, he whispered at a pitch and volume best suited for his hearing level—or for calling hogs—and many of his scathing comments were aimed at the sartorial splendor of singing cowboys like Gene Autry and Roy Rogers.

He didn't disappoint us this time, either!

"Who in hell ever saw a cowboy wear a gitup like that? He looks like a damn sissy with all them flowers and fringes."

Needless to say, the other small boys in the theatre giggled and cheered as his whisper echoed through the hall.

Grandpa fidgeted in his seat as the movie continued, muttering, under his breath, his disapproval of Gene and his wardrobe. Then about midway through the picture, he dropped another bombshell. Gene had been captured by a group of Indians and they were discussing his fate. Indian dialects, as spoken in the Republic or Monogram films, were among Grandpa's pet peeves. Since he spoke several Indian dialects himself, he was particularly sulphurous in his remarks when a film lacked authenticity.

As expected, Grandpa struck again.

"Hell's fire, boy. That ain't Indian they're talkin'—that ain't nothing' but jabber. They wouldn't know Indian talk if it jumped up and bit them on the ass!"

This brought another round of applause from the small fry in the audience. Of course, I was not sure how a language could jump up and bite one on the backside, but, knowing Grandpa's mood at the time, I thought it wise not to ask.

The picture droned on to its conclusion, with Grandpa continuing to mutter his displeasure under his breath. Then, as the head outlaw tried to escape in the night, Gene rode full speed in pursuit, made a flying tackle from his horse, caught the outlaw by the shoulders, and they both rolled down the conveniently located slope. As they jumped to their feet for the obligatory fist fight, the outlaw's black hat lay in the dirt. Gene's hat, however, miraculously remained in place, firmly anchored to his head, gleaming pure white in the Hollywood moonlight.

At that, Grandpa fired both barrels.

"Well, son of a bitch! Look at that. He falls off his horse, wallers around in the dirt, and don't even lose his hat or get it dirty. Now who in hell's gonna believe that? We ought to ask for our damn money back."

This final sally brought a standing ovation from the entire audience—kids and adults.

Gene won the fight, of course, and rode off with the girl, followed by a full Western band, on horseback, complete with musical instruments, singing the same sorry song that had opened the picture.

As the theatre lights came on and we walked up the aisle, Grandpa shook his head in disgust, incoherent by this

time. We exited the theatre to find my Dad waiting patiently at the curb to drive us home.

"How was the picture show?" he asked.

"Great," I said.

"It was damn good," Grandpa replied, quickly changing his mood. "Boy, let's go again next week."

And we did.

Now, over fifty years later, I try to explain my fond memories of these times to my grandchildren; but, jaded by all the conveniences that modern technology provides them, they don't understand. They smile politely and pretend to be interested, but they just don't understand. They can't imagine the magic and excited anticipation that was there, in a more simple time, when an old man and a small boy would spend all week discussing last Saturday's adventure and laying plans for the next expedition, when we would take each other to the picture show.

HOUND OF TERROR

Jan Roberts

I couldn't wait! It was my fourth birthday, and I was going to spend my very first "overnight" away from home. Mother and Dad had agreed to let me spend Saturday night on the farm with my aunt and uncle who had promised to take me into Wapella, Illinois, to see the street movie, which was a weekly social event. The farm families and the townspeople exchanged news and views on current events, and everybody's kids mingled.

At age four, I held onto Aunt Vide's hand and listened to grown-up conversation until dusk. The sky was barely dark enough to see the picture on the screen when the cartoons started. We hurried back to the parked car to watch the show. I sat in the back seat—alone.

Aunt Vide read the words to me as they appeared on the bottom of the screen. The picture was so graphic that spoken words weren't needed. The sky's fading light behind the screen created a dim story image, both on the screen and in my memory. I remember that a lot of people were gathered in an old eerie mansion to await the reading of a will. I recall spacious, neglected grounds with lots of trees. Fine roadsters arrived and paused on a circular driveway long enough to deposit beautiful women and elegantly attired gentlemen. It seemed to be a bizarre reunion of antagonistic relatives. Everybody quarreled, and nobody liked or trusted anybody.

The mood of the movie was becoming as black and sinister as the night which framed the black and white movie screen. As the guests arrived, they were assigned to formal bedrooms where they deposited their luggage. Following that, they returned to a foreboding drawing room to exchange restrained pleasantries while awaiting the butler's summons to dinner.

The increasing tempo of the impending storm outside pervaded the household atmosphere like heavy fog and created a ghoulish inconsistency with the guests façade of detached placidity. The devil-maestro who conducted this evil concert whipped the jagged lightning through the sky with his fiery baton, forcing the wind to wail and the thunder to boom hellish ovations. Although the movie was silent, the pictures created a fiend-like horror that stunned my childish imagination. To lend credibility to the plot, a stoic guest would pull back the heavy drapes to reveal a window-framed view of stark, lightning-lit trees succumbing to the unleashed fury of the storm. They were dancing, bending, and breaking like tortured ballerinas enslaved by the winds and whipped beyond endurance. And there, exposed by flashes of lightning, was the silhouette of

the ravenous hound with its vicious teeth bared, howling a prophesy of death!

I knew all those people were going to die! *I knew I was going to die!* But I was a good little girl who was "seen and not heard," so I kept really quiet and didn't fuss. I even tried very hard not to breathe.

Wide-eyed, I watched the movie. I watched the people go to bed. I watched them being murdered in their beds. I never actually saw them being murdered but *I knew* that's what happened. Right after that horrible hound's head peered around their bedroom door—they were DEAD. They were BLOODY DEAD! After finding a victim, the rest of the frightened guests would scurry up and down the hallways talking in hushed whispers. They gathered in the drawing room in small, protective groups to question and accuse each other and to share their own fears. They went back to bed reluctantly, knowing that sleep was the catalyst for the Hound of the Baskervilles.

It didn't relieve me one bit when they discovered that the hound's head was a puppet contrived to fit over the real murderer's hand. *I knew that dog did it!* That dog's head came around the bedroom door every time before someone was killed and you knew they were dead when he howled. The guests would cringe in terror and look around to see who was missing. Together, they would find the dead body with its fixed eyes open and staring.

He was going to kill me tonight and I knew it.

I won't close my eyes! I won't go to sleep!

I want my mama! I want to go home!

And, *I don't want to die!*"

I wished I could sit in the front seat with Aunt Vide and Uncle Charlie. If I said anything, I'd be a bad girl and that old dog would kill me for sure. The movie ended and I *had* to home—*with Aunt Vide and Uncle Charlie.*

There is no way to describe *dark* in the country. It gets dark in towns with streetlights. In the country, it gets BLACK. It's the kind of black that penetrates every pore of your being and blots out your soul. You can't see your hand in front of your face, and the only way you can tell what you've stumbled over is to feel it with your hands and pray, "Please, God, don't let it move!"

The ride home was BLACK. The car's headlights cut narrow yellow-white ribbons in the black. I knew there were dense trees on each side of the road because we were going up and down those same hills that had been so beautiful in the sunshine. There were all kinds of wild animals in those trees, and I hoped they were all asleep so they couldn't see us.

Uncle Charlie got out of the car, opened the gate, and drove through. Then he stopped and got out, leaving us helpless in the car while he walked behind, out of sight, and closed it. We drove up the lane to the house and found our way to the door in the darkness. We got inside but there was no light switch to flip. Aunt Vide struck a big match and lit a kerosene lamp.

Electricity doesn't mean much until it gets dark, and you don't have any. I was afraid of the shadows moving around on the kitchen walls. My aunt put the lamp on the table and helped me dress in my pajamas. She held my hand while we walked through the dining room and the living room. She opened a door, and we started up the steep, narrow staircase to the bedroom where I was going to sleep—Alone?!

I knew that dirty, mean, old dog was waiting at the top of those steps. The lamp barely lit the bottom steps, and it was pitch black at the top. Each step groaned a creaky warning as we made our way to the top. A narrow bed was pushed sideways against the wall, barely leaving enough wall space beyond its head to allow room for the half-door that opened into the storage attic. "That's where HE'S hiding," I thought, "HE'S in there!"

My aunt tucked me in and said, "Good-night." Then she started walking away, carrying the lamp with her! As she

withdrew, the big, black-dog shadows got bigger and bigger and leaped about menacingly on the walls. "Aunt Vide," I called out weakly, "Where are you going to sleep?" As she continued down the steps she answered, "On the back porch downstairs." I was . . . *all alone!*

I could hear the wind blowing the trees through the open windows, but I couldn't see anything at all. I knew that the hound was hiding behind the attic door right next to my head. I pulled the covers over my head, thinking, "I won't move! I'll stay awake all night! I won't breathe either! Maybe he won't see me!

I won't close my eyes!

I hurt all over, but I won't move!

If I move, he'll hear me and murder me!

I wish I was home!

I won't close my eyes. . . . I won't close my eyes. . . . I won't move. . . . I won't go to sleep. . . . I won't . . . . I won't. . . . I . . won't . . . . . ."

The sun was shining through the windows and the curtains were blowing gently in the morning breeze. I WAS ALIVE! I ached all over, but I really was alive.

I went downstairs and into the kitchen where my aunt and uncle were having breakfast. I couldn't eat. I wasn't hungry. I took my pajama sack outside and waited in the front yard for Mamma and Daddy to come. When they finally drove up, I climbed into the car and onto the back seat and refused to move.

Nobody was going to get me out of the car.

"I'm going home!"

GOLDEN MEMORIES OF THE SILVER SCREEN

Eleanor Jontry Brown

I'm not sure when I saw my first movie, but I must have been just a toddler. My first recollection is that I cried. Later, I knew that "Fatty" Arbuckle had meant me no harm, but his huge image on the screen scared me. I'm glad that it was not a permanent dislike of the movies. What a lot of pleasure I would have missed.

Being born in 1918 put me in the midst of the silent screen era. There was already a moviehouse in the business district of our town, Chenoa, Illinois, when I was born. It was called the Rex and showed many Westerns. At least that is what I saw the few times my babysitter took me there. I remember the last owner, John Pittman, who closed the Rex in 1925.

Silent movies were also shown at the Lyceum in St. Joseph's Parish Hall. Leo Twomey ran the projector, and movies were shown midweek and Saturday nights.

I enjoyed those incompetent Keystone Kops and laughed at cross-eyed Ben Turpin and poker-faced Buster Keaton. I remember the antics of Harold Lloyd with his trademark, horn-rimmed glasses. I can still see him hanging from the hands of a giant clock on the side of a building, high above the street. He gave me more than one hair-raising moment. His character portrayed the NERD of that era, but Mr. Lloyd knew what he was doing. He became a millionaire.

Ah, Clara Bow, the IT girl—ingenues Colleen Moore and Janet Gaynor—the VAMPS, Gloria Swanson, Pola Negri, Lupe Velez—I saw them all and many more.

There were my favorite male stars of that era, too—Ramon Navarro, Richard Dix, Ronald Colman, and Richard Arlen, to name a few.

My cousin Bernadine (Twomey) Elson played the piano when I attended the silent movies at the Lyceum. I often sat beside her. In the exciting parts, I used to jump up from the

chair. One time, a boy twice my age pulled the chair away and I sat on the floor. You can bet that cured me.

I don't know if the movie reels arrived with instructions or a synopsis for the pianist, but somehow Bernadine easily changed the music to fit the story. Only about one-third of the story was action—when she played eerie music as the actors entered a cave, or some soft romantic music for the love scenes. Of course, she had staccato music for the mounted riders chasing trains. Those old locomotives must have been very slow, the bandits always caught them. She used mood music to show the actors' emotions of rage, sadness, or fear. There were also parts of the movie where there was a minimum of action or emoting, such as a change of scene or views of the countryside, where she played a background music to fill the gaps.

Occasionally, Bernadine would get some new sheet music from the studio, and there was a little glass slide for the projector. When Leo put it in place and flashed it on the screen, it would list the title of the new song and below the title, "Miss B. Twomey at the piano." Bernadine then would play the song. Presumably, it had something to do with the movie.

In 1927, Al Jolson starred in the first full-length talking movie, *The Jazz Singer*. The sound synchronized with the action and voice, was a wonderful improvement. People no longer had to read the captions at the bottom of the screen. Maybe if the "silents" were still around, we would have a nation of readers instead of so many illiterate Americans.

We were unlucky in Chenoa. The "talkies" were the death knell for the silent films. The supply of those films dwindled, and we were in for a big surprise.

One evening, there appeared on the screen a rather droll message composed by our pastor, Father Hogben. I still remember the first two sentences: "The hens won't lay. The cows went dry." It went on to say that due to the continued depression and prohibitive cost for the Vitaphone equipment, this was the last movie at the Lyceum.

We were devastated. Few people had cars—or money for gas, if they did. The nearest theatre showing "talkies" was at Pontiac, ten miles away.

But life goes on, even without movies. I was fortunate that from age ten I spent part of my summer vacations with relatives in Chicago. Most of my time was with Aunt Stasia Knight, who was the best. She took me all over the city but especially to many movies. I can remember going to morning movies at the McVickers Theatre in the Loop. After lunch, we might go to the Oriental to see the stage show and another movie. Other days we took in the State Lake or the Chicago Theatre, which also had a stage show.

Sometimes a message would appear on the screen, inviting us to sing along with the bouncing ball to the accompaniment of the huge theatre organ. As the words appeared on the screen, the bouncing ball (a white dot) did indeed bounce from word to word as we sang. I loved it!

We also went to movies outside the Loop, like the ornate Granada on Sheridan Road and the new Southtown at 63rd and Halsted. In the lobby, there was a fountain and pool with goldfish.

Only one other Chicago relative shared my love for the movies. When I went to the films with Cousin Bud McCormick, he always sat through the movie twice. I could not leave because I didn't know how to get back to my uncle's apartment. Even knowing this, I never turned down a chance to go to the movies with Bud.

Through the movieless years in Chenoa, there were a few bright spots. One summer we had free movies weekly in the business district. The screen was hung from the roof of the Flat Iron Building and, for a short time, we enjoyed the movies again. On rare occasions, my older brothers or my sister took me along on the their dates to see a movie in Pontiac or Bloomington.

Times got better, and there were rumors that Chenoa was going to have a moviehouse again. It became a reality when

Elmer Larson opened the Ritz in the old Rex location, with the same original neighbors as the Rex, namely Balbach and Dorman Grocery and Parenti's Ice Cream Parlor. It was February 8, 1938, and the temperatures were in the sub-zero numbers that evening. You couldn't keep the crowds away for such a little thing as the weather. Having endured such a dry spell of no movies, it took a long time for local citizens to shake their thirst for movies. Mr. Larson kept them coming with his Bank Nights and Dish Nights. I was glad to have movies once more in town during the four years I lived in Chenoa after college.

I took my love of the movies to those other Illinois towns where I lived. Later, my husband Edward and I used to take our children to the drive-in near LaSalle, Illinois. By the time they played on the playground equipment and had their sweet treats, it was dark enough for the movie to start. Usually, the kids would quiet down and fall asleep, and we could enjoy the movie together. We never got back in the movie habit when the children were older. There were school activities, and we had television then.

Along the way, movies have changed. Although there are still some well-made movies that do not offend my sense of decency, there aren't enough. Hollywood spews out movie after movie filled with gutter language, sex, and violence. I don't watch them at the movies or on TV.

For me, the glory days of the silver screen and the magic of Hollywood has passed. Hollywood had given us an escape for a few hours from the hardships of the Big Depression and the realities and sorrows of our wars. The new movies don't offer that escape from today's troubles.

But all is not lost. I have only to pick out an "oldie" movie to watch on television. There they are: my favorite stars, captured forever in the best of their screen performances. In this way, I still continue my love affair with the movies.

THE ISIS THEATRE IN ROSEVILLE

Martha K. Graham

In the early 1900s, before most of the inhabitants of Roseville were able to enjoy the wonders of Thomas A. Edison's electric lighting in their own homes, the façade of Roseville's Isis Theatre glittered with a brilliance that attracted crowds of people like honey attracts flies. Other than the public library, which was always there for those who found books to be entertaining, the Isis Theatre was the only regularly open, organized, for-everyone-source-of-entertainment in Roseville. It vied for attention with the churches . . . Baptist, Christian, Congregational, and Methodist Episcopal. Probably most Roseville people spent more time per week sitting in the uncomfortable theatre seats than in the even more uncomfortable pews in the churches.

The Isis Theatre was in the center of town. It stood on the west side of Roseville's Main Street, just south of the intersection of Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, near the present location of the bank.

The theatre entrance was flanked by two tall wooden pillars painted green and gold, each topped by a crown that looked like a circle of brightly painted feathers. The glassed-in box office had a cut-out semicircle through which one pushed the price of admission, usually a dime, and received from the lady attendant a ticket torn from a huge roll of tickets. This bit of green paper was really a magic token permitting entry into a paradise. The interior was long, narrow, and sloping, with about four wooden, mahogany-colored, fold-down seats on each side of a center aisle. The stage at the far end had a roll-down white screen on which, when the show began, a stream of light from a machine in a balcony shown over our heads and projected the pictures from large rolls of film.

My older brother Richard was at one time employed to show the films, and I was sometimes allowed to climb up into the

cramped balcony to watch. Constant vigilance was necessary because the machines were erratic, sometimes showing a fine picture, sometimes making the images jitter uncontrollably, and sometimes blacking out completely. Cat-calls and loud remarks from the frustrated audience did not help the operator get the pictures going again. It took time to change reels. Sometimes the film had been rewound by the last operator in such a way that one saw the happy ending first. In that case, the film had to be rewound correctly, which took time. Too often the film broke and had to be spliced. No operator was willing to keep this job very long.

The Isis Theatre showed all the popular films of the time. I remember seeing *The Birth of a Nation*, *Robin Hood*, *Tarzan*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Sheik*, *Ben-Hur*, and *The Ten Commandments* there, to name only a few. Among the actors and actresses were Colleen Moore, Norma Talmadege, Tom Mix, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Johnny Weismuller, Clara Bow, Janet Gaynor, and Rudolph Valentino.

The action was always too quick and jerky, and the actors' facial expressions and gestures were much exaggerated in order to project the emotion or idea to the audience. This was the era of the silent screen. The only sounds (besides the hissing, booing, and sometimes happy sighing of the audience) came from the "orchestra pit," where the pianist endeavored to play music that corresponded to, and enhanced, the action on the screen, an utterly impossible task. It was not unusual for a stage coach hold-up to be accompanied by a love song on the wretched piano.

I think sound movies came to the Isis Theatre about 1930, but I was in college in Macomb then, and heard my first sound movie at the Illinois Theater there. It was *Sunnyside Up*, starring Janet Gaynor, and one song was "If I had a Talking Picture of You, I would Play it Every Time I felt Blue."

The Isis stage, when the movie screen was rolled up out of the way, was surprisingly large and deep. Live entertainment was sometimes offered, but it was rarely as interesting as the movies. It was usually slapstick comedy and unmemorable song-and-dance routines. Later, the stage was the setting for our Roseville Township High School operettas and class plays. By that time, red, yellow-fringed stage curtains had been installed, operated by ropes backstage that were hard to keep from tripping over. The stage was ill-ventilated, except for the stage door that opened on the north onto a vacant lot near which, at one time, the big, barnlike Roseville Opera House had stood.

My first experience on the Isis stage was as an eighth grader in an operetta *In Old Louisiana*, directed by our school music teacher Miss Julia Anderson. Grace Gawthrope (Peterson) a violinist from Monmouth accompanied our songs. In leading roles were Robert Von Dissen, Nedra Kidder, Leah Enfield, and Vernon Marston, and others were in the cast and chorus. Our ante-bellum costumes and scenery were impressive. Just as Vernon Marston prepared to sing his first solo, his mother in the audience was heard to moan, "Oh! Oh! He'll never be able to do it!" and his father answered, "Now calm yourself, Maggie. He's already doing it!"

Other operettas we gave were *China Town*, *Torreador*, and *In Ireland*. In the last named, Marie Burright (now Mrs. Charles Hamilton of Macomb) sang the lead with Rolland Truitt. At those school performances, the backstage reeked with odors of grease-paint and nervous sweat. But it was all very much fun.

On the corner, next door to the Isis Theatre, was an ice-cream parlor with a marble soda fountain backed by a huge, long mirror. The tables were small and round, with metal-backed ice-cream chairs drawn up. We could order hot chocolate, all flavors of soda, double-chocolate sodas, lemonade, banana splits, and a delicious confection I have never found

anywhere else. It was called Chocolate Food, and was made of scoops of ice cream sprinkled with malt and topped with chocolate and marshmallow syrup and nuts. The ice cream parlor was the ideal place for young and old to round out an evening at the Isis Theatre.

At the time the Isis Theatre opened, there seemed to be a custom of giving a fanciful, rather enigmatic name to a theatre. A movie theatre was, after all, a fanciful kind of place where fantastic things happened on the screen, so a custom emphasizing its magical characteristics was not surprising. But "Isis"... why choose such a name for our Roseville theatre? That word didn't even have a pretty sound. It wasn't fanciful, and it didn't have any meaning, or so I thought.

However, omnivorous readers acquire by accident a great amount of information, and among the trivia I discovered was that Isis was the name of the most important Goddess of the Egyptians. She dealt in magic, and she was knowledgeable about farming, and she taught farming to the Egyptians, making them prosperous.

So the puzzle fell into place. Roseville was a farming community. How better to honor the farmers who were the backbone of this community, who came to town regularly on Saturday nights to talk, shop, and enjoy the magic of movies with their families and friends. Whoever named the Roseville theatre "Isis" knew what they was doing, whether anyone else recognized the magic and the significance of the name or not.

As long as the Isis Theatre kept its Egyptian-pillar-decorated doors open, and its Egyptian Farmer-Goddess's name in lights, the people of Roseville and the surrounding community had no real need to go out of town for a movie . . . nor to Galesburg's beautiful Orpheum Theatre (named for Orpheus, a romantic musician and poet of Greek Mythology), nor to Monmouth's lovely Bijou Theatre (named for Rialto Bridge that curves over a Venetian canal, and over which one could travel to enjoy the ancient beauty and the romantic delights of Venice in Italy).

So, you see, the theatre owner in the village of Roseville was no back number when it came to choosing a fanciful, magic, and highly significant name for Roseville's main source of entertainment—the Isis Theatre.

SCENES BEHIND THE MOVIES

Ruth C. Van Horn

Can you imagine watching over 200 movies a year for over twenty years? Such a thought never entered my mind when I was a child, although we children did get to go to the movies once in awhile. I lived with my parents and brothers and sister on a farm six miles southwest of Macomb. It was owned by Dr. H. B. Cale. Sometimes when our parents went to town to buy groceries and shop, we children were sent to the movies. I don't remember our parents ever going. We usually went to Macomb's Illinois Theatre, although there was a theatre on the west side of the square and one on the south side. I think the one on the west side was named the Grand and the other one was called the Royal.

My husband, too, loved films, and he picked up old iron to sell to get money to go to the picture show in Augusta.

Rex Van Horn and I were married in 1935, in the post office in Augusta. About the same time, the theatre in Augusta was sold to the Better Theatres Circuit, which was owned by A. L. Hainline of Macomb, who also owned the Illinois Theatre and the *Macomb Journal*. Later, he started the Lamoine Theatre. When he purchased the theatre in Augusta, he also bought a number of others in the area, including theatres in

Hamilton, Canton, and Lexington. He renamed the one in Augusta the Cozy Theatre.

A few months after we were married, the postmaster died, and the political nature of the time meant that my husband's job disappeared. The Democrats had come into power. My husband did assist the new postmaster for a time, but, in the meantime, he had applied for a job at the Augusta theatre. Mr. Hainline told him to go to the theatre free and learn the business, including how to operate the machines. Then, if there was an opening later, he would be ready.

At that time, Joe Si Smith was the manager. His father, Tom Smith, owned the theatre in Colchester. Later, Joe Si was transferred to another theatre in the northern part of the state, and Rex was given the job as manager in Augusta. He worked there for four years, and then one day Mr. Hainline called us in and said he wanted us to buy the theatre. We explained that we did not have the money, but he made an agreement that we were to pay a certain amount each month. We could also pay more when and if we could. There was no time limit set. He sold several of his other theatres the same way. We did not know that he was ill at the time, and in the fall, he died.

Mr. Hainline would not allow candy or popcorn in his theatres, but the first thing we did was to buy candy and popcorn machines. The seventy percent profit in popcorn stood us in good stead.

After owning the theatre for two years, Rex was called to service in World War II. We hired a man to do the janitor work, and I took care of the buying and booking of the pictures. We already had a projectionist, cashier, and ushers. The janitor learned how to operate the machines, if necessary. Rex served almost two years in the Army and, while there, he showed training films to the soldiers, since he already knew how to operate the machines.

When the war was over, business improved because husbands and wives were both earning incomes. Also, there had been little on which to spend money, and the enthusiasm of victory led to celebration. The majority of our business came from working class people, who watched all of the movies, while those who had more money picked mainly what they thought was best.

Most people think a picture can be selected by the theatre owner and that only the films he thinks can be money-makers will be selected. That is not so. The film companies, having offices in Chicago, sent salesmen out to sell their pictures. There was considerable protocol in this business. Macomb could run a picture only after it had been shown in Chicago. Then Augusta could show it after Macomb. Macomb, having two theatres, the Illinois and the Lamoine, used more pictures, so the theatres could rent from more companies. When you leased from MGM, 20th-Century Fox, Paramount, Warner Brothers, United Artists, Republic, or any other company, you were expected to stay with them. If the Plymouth or Bowen theatre owners rented from the same company, they could not show the same picture until after we had.

The pictures were rented in groups of four or five, and there was usually just one top picture. Actually, you worked for the film company. Everything had to be paid for a week in advance, including the short subjects such as the comedy films and newsreels. The top pictures were sold with a guarantee, plus a percentage of forty to sixty percent. *Gone with the Wind* demanded sixty percent. The companies sent checkers to count the people. Sometimes they made themselves known, and sometimes they lurked outside the theatre counting customers. Not all the percentage pictures were checked, just the ones with the highest rental fees.

We took a trade magazine which gave reviews of the different movies, and some exhibitors sent in reports. One theatre owner was so ashamed of attendance at a certain picture that he increased the total, not knowing that he was being checked at the time.

We always had to think of a way to advertise a picture to make as much profit as possible from it. We took handbills and posters to different towns twice a week, besides advertising in newspapers, and we also had a large personal mailing list.

To advertise one Shirley Temple picture, we bought cards on which Shirley had written a special invitation to attend the picture. We addressed them in local children's names and sent them to Hollywood, where they were mailed and postmarked. Then they were sent out like personal invitations.

When we showed *Hamlet*, Rex wrote to the English teachers in the area, offering them a special price to come to a matinee and bring their students. They came, and were lined up and down the street waiting to get in. The salesman who had rented the picture happened to come that day. He was amazed, and we were all so sorry we didn't have a camera to take a picture of the crowd so he could use it as a selling feature in approaching some other exhibitor.

When we ran *Gone with the Wind*, we started at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday and ran it through Tuesday at advanced prices. There was, of course, a man to count the people. In fact, a second man came to make sure that the first man was there.

We had serials after school for kids and charged a dime. When we bought the theatre in 1941, we charged 25¢ on Sunday and Monday, and 20¢ on other days for adults. Some short subjects could be seen only by wearing what were called 3D glasses, similar to colored glasses. They were a novelty to help sell the picture. Another group we had to pay money to was ASCAP, the union of music composers and publishers.

We sometimes had stage shows, too, which included talent from the radio station WLS in Chicago. Although Smiley Burdette never appeared on stage in person, he was a favorite in the Saturday night movies, along with Gene Autry. Smiley lived in Augusta for two years when he was a teenager, and his father was the minister at the Christian Church.

When TV came along, the movie business was destroyed in the small towns. Movie customers were the first to buy a TV. As a result, we decided to sell the theatre and build a drive-in restaurant with carhops for service. The theatre buyer put in a bowling alley, which is still there. We operated Rex's Drive-In for twelve years after selling the theatre, and then we retired.

Because Mr. Hainline had used the name Cozy Theatre, and we retained it all those years, many of our patrons did not know our last name. Years later, people would often say, "Where have I seen you before?" And we would identify ourselves as the people who had run the Cozy Theatre in Augusta.

SATURDAY AT THE MOVIES

Ruth Ferchow

Going to the movies on Saturday afternoon was a big part of growing up in the 1930s in Taylorville, Illinois. My friends and I looked forward to this all week; a good part of our free time during that period was spent in trying to figure out how Hoot Gibson could possibly get out of the mine shack that the evil Slade had blown to smithereens with a charge of dynamite at the end of Chapter Eight of the serial.

There were two theatres in Taylorville: the large, modern Capitol on the square which showed the first-run pictures, and the smaller Ritz, one half block east, where lesser pictures were featured during the week, but which, on Saturday afternoons, was the mecca for every boy and girl who could scrape up the 10¢ admission fee.

My little brother Bill and I started out from home together, but about a block down the street I'd meet up with Jean. Then Bill would stop by for Eddie, and we would go on,

either walking and running, depending on how much time we thought we had in separate groups with us joining another girl or two and then gathering boys until we reached the Ritz.

We always walked—to the show, to school, to church—everywhere—in those days. Our family *had* to walk because we didn't own a car. But even those who did have cars didn't use them to drive kids anywhere. The father used the car to go to work, and maybe the family used it to go to church or for the weekly Saturday night shopping trip. Whatever the weather, we always walked to the show.

Often, Mom popped corn and we each took a brown paper sack of it along. Sometimes, we got a nickel in addition to our dime admission fee. Then we had a big decision to make. Should we get a box of Crackerjacks with a prize inside? Probably the Holloway All-Day Sucker was the best buy because it would last almost halfway through the show. They also had hot buttered popcorn which smelled so good and somehow tasted better than that we brought from home. Or, the Three Musketeers candy bar with its three separate pieces, each a different kind of chocolate, drew our attention. Or maybe we should buy Jawbreakers at three for nickel. How hard it was to decide.

The show started at two o'clock; the ticket office opened at 1:30. We wanted to be first in line because, once inside, we could race for the front row of seats. There was a railing in front of that row. If you slid way down in the seat and stretched your legs as far as they would go, you could put your feet up on the rail.

But if Mary and her brother went with us, we had to sit in the balcony. We couldn't understand why they couldn't sit downstairs just because their skin was darker. I asked my Dad, and he said, "Because it's the law," and, since he was a policeman, he knew all about the law! Anyway, it was almost more fun to sit up there. We could look down into the theatre and holler at anyone we knew as they came in, or maybe even throw a few kernels of popcorn down at them—until the usher came up and told us we'd have to leave if we didn't sit down and keep quiet.

Then it was two o'clock and the theatre darkened. Expectantly we waited. First came the local ads which we knew by heart. When the ad for Luster's Ford came on, we all chorused together with the announcer, "Just call 9-9-9."

Oh boy, the "selected short subject" today is a cartoon! How we laugh at the antics of the characters. Then—this is what we have been waiting for—Chapter Eleven of the serial. There's "Hoot," trying desperately to break loose from the ropes tying him to the chair. They switch to a scene showing Slade—oh, he was a big, mean-looking man with a perpetual sneer on his face, and (you guessed it) he wore a black hat. He's running up behind the rocks to set off the dynamite. Then, back we go to Hoot. He gets the ropes untied. In a flash, he dives through a small rear window (they hadn't shown that scene last week), rolls down the hill and away from the shack just as Slade pushes the plunger, and the shack explodes with boards and glass flying in all directions. Hoot whistles and his horse comes running, and he's off to warn the ranchers that Slade is going to blow up the dam and flood the whole valley and town. About fifteen minutes later, after a few more adventures, Hoot is in an even tougher spot; then the "To Be Continued" comes up on screen.

Then we could relax a little as the "Previews of Coming Attractions" began. This was a good time to go the restroom or get a drink of water from the fountain in the lobby.

Finally, the feature picture, always a cowboy show on Saturday, began. Today it's my favorite—Gene Autry, the singing cowboy! My brother joins the other boys in not liking him, seeing him as a sissy with all that singing and stuff. He prefers Buck Jones or Hopalong Cassidy. I like them, too, but Gene's my favorite. Do you know, he even came to Taylorville once, but that was before he was so famous—back when he was

singing on the radio. I was too young then to know about him. How I regret that!

I was lucky today; I got a seat in the front row. I sat enthralled watching Gene, his comic sidekick Froggie, and his wonder horse Champion. At the end, Gene sings a song of farewell to the lovely rancher's daughter and rides off with Frog, who either falls off his horse or says or does something funny. We leave laughing.

I take my feet off the rail and slide up in my seat. My foot's gone to sleep; I hop up the aisle. How bright the sun is after two hours in the darkened theatre!

We start walking home, discussing Hoot's current dilemma and how exciting the Buck Jones movie will be next week. At each block, one or more of our friends "peel off" to go in a different direction, until, at last, we leave Jean and Eddie; then there's just Bill and me. We race into the house, calling, "Mom, we're home," and start to tell her and our two little sisters the whole story of how Gene Autry saved the ranch. She's baked cupcakes, so we each have one with a glass of milk—a perfect ending to a perfect day!

GOING TO THE MOVIES AT THE TIVOLI

Phyllis T. Fenton

Going to the movies at the Tivoli Theatre in Chicago was always a very grand occasion. On a Saturday afternoon, when I was a child during the middle 1920s, I could go from the world of humdrum to one of sheer magic at the Tivoli. Furthermore, since it was only two miles from home, we could walk there and save the carfare for ice cream.

The Tivoli was located on the south side at 64th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. Built in the early 1920s, it was one of the five or so movie pleasure palaces in Chicago, and seated four thousand people. The movies, of course, were silent. Subtitles and organ music moved the plot along. Some films I especially remember are the Philo Vance mysteries and the Janet Gaynor-Charles Farrell romances. I'll never forget *The Bat*, spooky and scary, nor Douglas Fairbanks as the audacious rebel "Robin Hood." Always, too, there was great vaudeville.

Otherwise, you might as well go to the Harvard, the local theatre, which every Saturday ran a cowboy-Indian cliffhanger as bait for the kids to come back next week. You might also see "B" quality serials like Dr. Fu Manchu or tales of people stranded in the African jungle surrounded by spear-carrying cannibals.

The Harvard, small and drab, cost 10¢, and kids could bring popcorn. At the Tivoli, on the other hand, which cost 15¢ because it was such a grand place, with a lobby of marble floors and Greek style pillars decorated with gold leaf, splashing fountains, and ornate sculpture, along with a stairway covered with carpet so thick your feet sank into it, popcorn was not allowed. For refreshment, we waited until the show was over; and then, if we had the extra dime, we went to the ice cream parlor next door and selected either a chocolate or strawberry ice cream soda.

This happened because the Tivoli was a grown-ups' theatre, and, when going there, we acted like grown-ups. We dressed up and sometimes wore hats. We talked in adult-like whispers to decide whether to sit on the main floor or in the mezzanine or balcony; then, we walked slowly, like dignified grown-ups, past the heavy fabric and velvet wall hangings and sculpture, over the thick carpets, to our preferred first row balcony. Once seated in the wide, cushioned, and roomy seats, we looked into a deep, dark void until gradually the dim sparkle from the overhead chandeliers illumined this vast interior.

Behavior rules were strict, unlike at the Harvard where my younger brother could stamp his feet and bang the seat

when the army ran up the American flag over a field of dead Indians. Once at the Tivoli, when he started to whistle at a kissing scene, the uniformed usher hustled over and flashed a light in his face and demanded he either leave or be quiet. Once was enough.

Included in our 15¢ admission was a newsreel—either *Time Marches On* or Paramount's *Eyes and Ears of the World*—documenting world events such as the Jack Dempsey fights or Queen Marie of Rumania visiting Chicago. *Felix the Cat* or *Keystone Cops*, along with other short subjects, entertained us, but most loved of all was an Our Gang comedy from which I recall only Spanky, Farina, and a little blonde girl named Jean Darling.

While the house lights remained dark and the screen still in view, the theatre organist, Jesse Crawford, entertained us by playing popular hits like "Smilin' Thru" and "Peg O' My Heart." By following the bouncing ball as it indicated each word to be sung, the audience joined in a 1920s style singalong.

When the drapes closed over the screen, and the footlights lit up the orchestra, the enchanted world of vaudeville began. The live dance band played more songs like "Let a Smile be Your Umbrella" and "Toot-Toot-Tootsie Goodbye" and the spotlight focused on the young, handsome band leader Frankie Masters, who dazzled us with his all-white suit.

When the layers of filmy curtains parted and opened up the large stage, the orchestra continued as background music for the jugglers, tumblers, and acrobats; it also accompanied the girls' ballet, their gauzy dresses illuminated by pink and lavender lights. Sometimes a ventriloquist or magician led us into the world of "marvelous wonders." Comedians amused us, while others delighted us with a soft shoe and strut, balancing a cane and straw hat with a running patter of chuckles. Sometimes we went to a smaller theatre, the Stratford, where an unknown straw hat and cane man called Bob Hope performed.

By the time I was twelve years old, the Vitaphone sound system was added to film and the "talkies" were born. New stars emerged. Others like the magnificent John Gilbert faded away. Broadway revues were created, technicolor arrived, and as a consequence, Vaudeville died a very sudden death.

A matinee at the Tivoli, however, was still a very special occasion. Enveloped in the grotto blue darkness of the mezzanine seats, we thrilled to new stars like Maurice Chevalier, the singing boulevardier; we adored Katherine Hepburn as she played out the fantasy of the modern woman; and we felt the lump in the throat when Bogart waved goodbye to Bergman in *Casablanca*. The magic of the movies still floated us away to an escape from reality and, through all the changes over the years, going to the movies at the Tivoli on a Saturday afternoon was always a very grand occasion.

DRIVE-IN MOVIES1940 s STYLE

Tony Cichoke

Before the dawn of drive-in movies, with their huge screens, their poled sound boxes firmly fixed in concrete foundations, and their neverending hills and furrows of gravel (laid out like so many rows of corn), each small town had its combination amateur night and outdoor movie.

In the summers of the 1940s, a central Illinois small town tradition was the combination amateur night and two-reel movie. This once-a-week production, proudly sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce, was situated in the town center or in a neighboring field. A white, double-bed sheet effectively functioned as the screen. The screen (2x4 wooden frame) was secured to a wooden stage or small flat-bed trailer truck. Two large loudspeakers, borrowed from a local merchant and flank-

ing the screens, provided the sound. The sheet bellowed in the warm summer breeze and gave increased action to even the most boring film.

The night's program would inevitably begin with a welcome from the town mayor, who, each week, seemed to be giving a campaign speech more than introducing the evening's program. The difficulty and expense in obtaining the films were always recounted. Finally, the film (usually of ancient vintage) would begin.

We marveled at Johnny Weismuller, as he swung from tree to tree (with his faithful companion, Cheeta) from impossible heights into raging waters, swimming tortuous rivers or shark-infested waters to rescue his "Jane." What viewer didn't tingle on hearing, "Me, Tarzan - You, Jane." Or we thrilled at the sight of the incredibly handsome Errol Flynn in *Robin Hood*. Could any human be so suave, so courageous, so incredibly good looking? If we had a Robin Hood in our town, he'd surely change things!! We watched in wide-eyed, open-mouthed admiration as the Lone Ranger or Zorro or Roy Rogers raced down a canyon in hot pursuit, or rescued terrified, defenseless maidens from the clutches of some evil villain, or snatched a crying baby from a runaway, horseless, stage coach just before it careened over a rocky cliff to destruction and sure death.

But no event was met with greater anticipation than the weekly episode of the current serial. How we loved to cheer for Superman or Flash Gordon and to loudly hiss and boo the enemies of Gotham City or the Universe. Each monumental struggle was our struggle, each victory our victory.

We laughed with Laurel and Hardy in their ridiculously funny adventures. We identified with Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland as "Andy Hardy" met each small town challenge of life and love.

Carloads of young people and families flocked to the summer movies/entertainment program. Blankets were intermittently spread out between cars, pick-up trucks, and in the tall grass along the edges of the clearing. From above, this random color pattern was like one of Grandma's gigantic patchwork quilts. Baskets of cold chicken, sandwiches, jars of pickles, and quarts of lemonade anchored the blankets from wind or the dancing feet of children in random chase. The night air was filled with the fragrant aromas from various tantalizing foods, freshly cut hay, and the smell of sprouting corn bursting from the rich black dirt of middle America. A gentle breeze caressed those present and bathed them with a sensual feast.

This was a time for friends to meet, children to share their summer experiences, and for the flower of youth to strut around—the girls parading their beauty, the boys flexing their muscles, bragging of future football conquests. Last year's disappointing season was a thing of the past. It was future challenges which were now most important.

Young people cruised from one car to another, exchanging gossip of who was going with whom, who had moved into town this summer, who had taken trips to faraway places, who had the lead in next year's class play, and so on.

Young mothers swapped tips on child rearing. Men loudly argued the differential values of a John Deere, a Case, or a Caterpillar tractor. And the silver-haired reminisced their neverending past tales which seemed to grow in magnitude with each retelling.

A young man leaned casually against his highly polished red Chevy, picking his teeth with a long straw, and dreamily related his amorous experiences at the old sand quarry.

While they set up for the movie's second reel, the mayor, with much fanfare and gusto, took the stage and emceed the evening's talent show. Each week, the best young performers would compete for prizes from local merchants and the opportunity to return the following week. Aspiring singers, musicians, magicians, and acrobats all strove for first place and bragging rights for the next week. The contestants were judged by the cream of local society and politics. At times, a beauty

contest was substituted for the talent show. On some nights, there were both.

Some of the more memorable attractions for the summer season included the Steppel family and their famous acrobatic pantomime acts; Josephine and her troop of educated dogs; and Cecilia, the song bird of central Illinois. Culture was offered, too, in the appearance of Count Jerome Bogatowski, "the Greatest of Male Violinists," straight from triumphs in Oskaloosa (Iowa), Galesburg (Illinois), Keokuk (Iowa), and Saint Cloud (Minnesota). But, the sight of the three-hundred pound gymnast (in undersized tights) Gertrude Hempelmeyer, standing on her hands, her body arching backwards, feet dangling over her shoulders (and flanking her face), while singing an impassioned version of "The Star Spangled Banner," was always the sure-fire show stopper and was guaranteed to bring feelings of pride, dismay, and patriotism to swell in the teary souls of those in attendance. The stage seemed to rise and fall with her high or low notes, swaying to and from with her rhythmic rendition.

The crowds attending the summer festivities were not reluctant to register their feelings. At one performance, the Simpson sisters sang their hearts out to a decidedly disappointed crowd of onlookers, causing witnesses of the event to note that, although no one threw any cabbages, tomatoes, or eggs, one ear of corn was seen to traverse the stage (reaching it with an audible thump). However, the desire to yell in a sort of wavy, boisterous chorus possessed all those in attendance. The somewhat rhythmic eruption was about as musical as the songs attempted on the stage and might even be considered as a more artistic triumph of sound.

A tremendous response from all gathered was noted when aspiring actors from local colleges or theatre groups would give abbreviated versions of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, or Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*. But the ground would shake when husky Miss Josephine Klutz donned her highly-worn, rented Spanish costume and mantilla, stained her face (with brown shoe polish), pinned on her black wig of homemade horse hair, and sang arias from the opera *Carmen* . . . a yearly ritual.

These weekly movies and other activities were not just an evening of entertainment; they were an event, a happening, an integral part of the very social fiber of the community. They functioned as a combined Irish stew of community picnic, carnival, amusement park, political gathering, and all-around opportunity to reinforce traditional values of God, family, community, and country.

Those were the days when life was slower and filled with simple joys. It was a period when young people had time to make mistakes and to discover who they were. I look back on those days with feelings of warmth, peace, and contentment. It was a good time to be alive! It was a good place to be!

YELLOW BRICK ROADS LEAD TO . . . ANYWHERE

Dorothy M. Ross

The Orpheum Theatre in Springfield was once the most splendid in all of central Illinois. Located just north of the Sangamon County Courthouse (now the "Old State Capitol"), it took up much of the block. The Illinois National Bank was its neighbor to the south, and small shops were situated to the north. In a small, triangular patch of earth to the south sat a beautiful popcorn wagon from which emanated wondrous smells that permeated the air during movie hours, luring late afternoon shoppers to partake.

The fabulous Orpheum opened its doors in 1927, and fell to the ground in 1965, victim of the wrecking ball. The period between was one that local residents both reveled in and took for granted. Sadly, drive-in theatres helped bring its demise;

parents could take the entire family for one price. Other factors were television in every home, offering a wide variety of enjoyment for the simple tastes of the community; and malls on the perimeter of the city that had their own theatres and could offer a sort of baby-sitting service along with myriad shopping opportunities. It was perhaps inevitable that the mighty Orpheum should fall.

The first movie I recall seeing (I'm not sure if I was in school yet) was *Angels with Dirty Faces*, the story of two slum brothers. If memory serves, Jimmy Cagney played the bad brother who ended up getting shot by the police; the good brother—Pat O'Brien, of course—grew up to be the parish priest.

The slum setting intrigued me. We didn't call them ghettos yet, and, as a very young child who had helped her mother pin wet laundry onto the clothesline, I couldn't figure out how the lines that stretched from balcony to balcony of the walk-up flats functioned. The clotheslines in our backyard stretched between two T-shaped poles that looked like telephone poles, and we used both sides to hang the washing. There were two lines between those balconies, too, which worked on a pulley system. Naively assuming the indigent occupants of those slum apartments used both sides of the line, just as we did, I had visions of wooden clothes pins flying into the air when they reached the pulley, releasing the laundry to drop to the dirty streets below. It never occurred to me that those lines were not used to capacity.

The next movie I remember was *The Wizard of Oz*. My best friend's mother took Betty and me on a Saturday afternoon. It was a special "dress up" affair for two six-year-olds. Vivian purchased the tickets, and we entered the wide, double doors into the main lobby of the Orpheum, popcorn bags clutched in hot little hands. Our eyes widened as we took in the grandeur of that lobby: tall ceilings, an enormous winding stairway covered with thick carpeting that led to the balcony, and a decor that appeared as though a Sultan, at the very least, might soon materialize to welcome us. Huge crystal chandeliers glistened, sending rays of light bouncing off the padded gilt benches and other furnishings, permitting us to walk in our own small shadows. It was a far cry from our own rural homes with their Olson rugs made of used woolen clothing we bundled up and sent to be woven into room-size carpets, the table-top Philco radios, and that ever-present heating stove in the corner.

Led by the handsomely uniformed usher and the small flashlight he held as carefully as though it were a magic beacon, we walked the dimly lit aisle and took our seats about midway down. I remember sitting on the aisle, with Vivian to my right, watching seemingly headless, bodiless feet pass by me, lit by the small bulbs in the side of each aisle seat that threw light into the carpeted path.

Soon the lights went down, and, before long, I was flying through the air with Dorothy from black-and-white Kansas to colorful Oz. That my name was the same as hers made it even more enthralling. But as the minutes went by and Dorothy was threatened by the wicked witch, I tensed, small fingers gripping the arms of my seat. Then, as the sands ran through the hourglass, apparently sealing that other Dorothy's doom, I could no longer watch. I hid my eyes with my hands, knowing that the witch would prevail. I was almost afraid to listen; the seconds ticked by like centuries until, suddenly, I was aware that all was well once more. Dorothy was safe, and the bad old witch had melted away! It was a glorious feeling of safety regained, that wonderful knowledge that Dorothy and her trio of unlikely friends had triumphed over the evil espoused by the witch and all her cohorts. I walked out of that theatre at Betty's side, never once mentioning my moment of doubt, my fears. Besides, Betty had been seated at Vivian's right, and I was pretty darned sure she'd hidden her eyes too. Betty was always a "scairdy-cat"!

The Orpheum was where I first saw *Gone with the Wind* with my grandparents one Sunday afternoon. I was not at all convinced that Clark Gable was as wonderful as my mother, aunts, and grandmother thought, but Rhett Butler quickly made me a believer. Years later, my own daughters were as reluctant as I had been with regard to the charms of Mr. Gable. It was my very distinct pleasure to introduce them, on two separate occasions, approximately seven years apart, to the magnificent actor.

When I was old enough to date, it was always a special thrill to see a movie at the Orpheum, second only to holding hands in the balcony. The popcorn still came from the wagon outside, a lobstertail dinner could be enjoyed (not that I ever had the opportunity at that stage in my life) at the nearby Leland Hotel's Red Lion Room for three dollars and fifty cents, and a five dollar bill was a fortune, indeed!

Sometimes when I came home from college on weekends, a girlfriend who had a car and was a dedicated movie addict would pick me up on Sunday afternoon; we would drive into Springfield and see movies—always two, and sometimes three—but not always at theatres as plush as the Orpheum. Then she'd leave me and my luggage at the bus station for my ride back to Macomb. After three movies, I usually had a horrible headache, which took several aspirin and a good sleep to get over.

The drive-in theatres could be the answer to a family's dream, or their worst nightmare. Two adults with two or more children penned up in the confines of the family Ford for several hours often turned into complete chaos. If Junior didn't behave, there was no way to send him to his room; if Sissy spilled the homemade lemonade all over the seat, an invasion of flying, crawling creatures would come to partake of the goodies. If the baby was fussy, he could easily outdo the speaker hooked over the window glass in decibels, drowning out the sweetest of love scenes or the rowdiest of John Wayne fights. On the other hand, some cars soon had windows so steamed over it was impossible to see in or out—which was probably just as well.

But these drive-in theatres signaled the end of the glory days of such beautiful edifices as the Orpheum Theatre. When such splendid "real" theatres disappeared, they took with them much of the aura that surrounded those wonderful old films in black and white or living color. Somehow, sitting in a modern four-screen theatre at the edge of the mall just doesn't lend the ambiance found when we searched for adventure and romance, for our hopes and dreams, by stepping through those beautiful doors of the old Orpheum. Something very grand, gracious, and beautiful was lost forever.

V Working Decades Ago

WORKING DECADES AGO

Except for their families, nothing is more important to most people than their work. And it isn't just because of the money. As psychoanalyst and social critic Erich Fromm said in *The Sane Society*, "In the process of work . . . man molds and changes himself."

People develop as individuals by filling a role demanded by their work. A woman who has spent years as a doctor has learned to fulfill and express herself through that role, and she is different in some ways from the woman she might have been as a store clerk, librarian, or politician. In short, our work has lasting psychological consequences for us, shaping our sense of identity, contributing to our outlook on life.

The memoirs in this section depict various jobs that people held or accomplished decades ago, and in the process they reveal something about the people who did them. Ruth Gash Taylor's "Farewell to the Linotype" is a good example. In the process of reading about the typesetting machine that had such a big impact on newspaper production, we encounter a woman whose "days were long and boring" until she taught herself to operate a Model 4 Linotype and started "a lifelong love affair with printing." She was clearly good at her job and proud of her skill, but she also realized that problems like "etaoin" and "shrdlu" were part of life, too.

Her memoir also reminds us that machines have progressively invaded the workplace, creating jobs that are more disagreeable and meaningless than the labor-intensive ones they eliminated. So, work in the twentieth century is commonly less satisfying than it used to be. But Taylor obviously developed an emotional bond with her machine, even if it sometimes spattered her with hot lead.

By contrast, Mary Dequimpaul's work in a hospital lab was directly related to people's lives, yet it could be frustrating, too. It called for dedication and resilience. But it is notable that she uses "we" to tell her story, thereby revealing the intense feeling of cooperation in a worthwhile effort that gave meaning to her work.

The memoirs of William L. Defrates, Ralph Eaton, and Robert Little chronicle early work experiences. The first depicts a common childhood job, selling newspapers, and perhaps none of the memoirs more clearly shows how selfhood is gradually constructed by meeting the challenges of work. The items by Eaton and Little are both pervaded by a sense of change, but Eaton is proud of participating in the transition to electrical power that meant so much to rural people while Little was, in a sense, the victim of change, as his expertise in producing disease-free seed corn became obsolete.

Farm work is vividly recalled in two of the memoirs. The long, hard day of the farmer in corn picking time is recalled in detail by Arthur Hawbaker, and although he avoids self-praise, there is an almost heroic quality about the life he once lived, so completely centered as it was around exhausting physical labor. Lucille Ballinger's account of a woman's work on butchering day reminds us that women also labored mightily on the farm—and that certain jobs just couldn't be hurried.

Finally, Al Hartman's account of "Wine-Making in Monroe County" depicts a successful but socially doomed family enterprise, in which even the children had a role to play. His fine memoir was trimmed considerably by the editors to fit the format of this section, but in his typescript, now available with hundreds of other "Tales from Two Rivers" contest entries in Archives and Special Collections at the WIU Library, he provides an extensive discussion of the arched wine cellars that are a unique heritage in Monroe County.

In all of these memoirs it is clear that a myriad of positive values arise from the struggles and satisfactions of work.

John E. Hallwas

FAREWELL TO THE LINOTYPE

Ruth Gash Taylor

So long, "etaoin" and "shrdlu." Although you didn't mean anything, you showed up in print often enough to merit an explanation in some of the fatter dictionaries. You'll probably disappear even from the dictionaries one of these days.

Your demise will parallel that of the Linotype, the machine that made you an enigma for generations of newspaper readers who have been confounded by such sentences as "A major apartment building fire illustrated how dangerous etaoin shrdlu."

For people who have seen etaoin and shrdlu in print, but never understood why, this is the explanation:

Etaoin and shrdlu are the letters on the first two rows of keys on the Linotype, the machine that set the type for newspapers, books, and magazines for nine decades. If a Linotype operator goofed in the first words of a line, the line would be completed by running the fingers down the first and second rows of keys, getting first etaoin, and then shrdlu.

In theory, the line would be thrown into a metal container called a "bucket"—the operator's wastebasket. In practice, however, lines containing the gibberish got into print thousands of times in the small country weekly newspapers as well as the metropolitan giants. The juiciest detail of many a story was lost in etaoin and shrdlu.

I came under the spell of the Linotype September 8, 1941, when I went to work at *The Hamilton Press*, Hamilton, Illinois, as office girl. Answering the telephone and typing news items did not take much time. The days were long and boring until the newspaper's owner permitted me to teach myself how to operate his Model 14 Linotype. Thus began a lifelong love affair with printing.

The Linotype clicked and clacked as brass matrices fell into line to receive the molten metal that made a line of letters. Its cogs and belts moved synchronously; its robot arm returned the matrices to their ingenious sorting system.

One peril of Linotype operation was that, if something went wrong in the casting process, the operator "had a squirt." That meant the melted lead—all 550 degrees of it—flew every which way, often landing on the operator's person or clothes. When this happened, some accomplished typesetters could swear for five minutes straight and never use the same epithet more than once.

Mr. C. had a squirt into his mustache and nose. He sat squirming for long painful minutes while his wife plucked out the hardened metal. He lost his mustache, but otherwise was not seriously harmed.

I have white scars on my hands and arms, souvenirs of long ago squirts.

Linotype operators were often a colorful lot. Sometimes they settled down in one town and became solid citizens. Others wandered from newspaper to newspaper, anxious for a change of scenery, a slightly larger paycheck, an opportunity to see how they did things in the shop beyond the next horizon.

The onset of World War II curbed travel, but sometimes tramp printers would stop in Hamilton. Usually, they wanted only a day's work to pay for meals and a night's lodging before they crossed the Mississippi to seek work at the *Daily Gate City* in Keokuk, Iowa.

One was "The Hat," who always appeared in a top hat and tuxedo. Another was "Big Marie," who came to work in a mink cape and diamond earrings—provided they had not been hocked to keep Marie going until the next paycheck.

A perennial visitor was a character who claimed to be related to a family associated with a famous ball park. He never lasted over three hours. He needed to gargle away a parched throat so often that, by the end of three hours, he couldn't distinguish a Linotype from a chihuahua.

One time, he claimed to be on the wagon. He proudly displayed his deterrent—a Turkish pipe. It was a complicated affair with a large bowl over a small urn. Water filled the urn; tobacco was placed in the bowl and lighted. Later, Mr. C. missed the clatter of the Linotype, and investigated. He found his new operator fast asleep. The water in the urn of the Turkish pipe had been replaced with rum.

Except for these spasmodic intervals, I was the full-time operator after the war effort claimed the man in that job. I, in turn, gave way to Mr. C.'s son when he was home on vacation from college.

I very soon ran afoul of the son. He scattered hyphens like confetti. When he came to the end of a line, he didn't worry about the correct division of a word, or whether a word could be divided at all. He dropped in a hyphen—as in b-rown—and the rest of the word was on the next line.

As proofreader, I marked all the incorrect divisions. He was furious. Who was this country jake to challenge the BOSS's SON?

I guess he has been vindicated. He went on to hold a very prestigious position. Today, computers divide words as haphazardly as he did.

My Linotype keyboard did not engrave in stone the life of the community, yet it was an integral part of the something "black and white and read all over." But in the process of making that contribution, I probably also contributed incomprehensible lines of etaoin and shrdlu.

Now computers envelop us, and it is difficult for a younger generation to understand how anyone got out a newspaper without them.

WORKING IN A HOSPITAL LAB

Mary Dequimpaul

As green as the proverbial grass, I was deeply impressed by the surroundings on entering the medical laboratory of St. Elizabeth Hospital back in the 1940s. Needless to say, the aforementioned surroundings have changed drastically (but for the better) over the years. Counters were then lined with glass vials holding blood and other unappealing forms of body juices, microscopes, sterilizers and other objects that were unidentifiable to my untrained eye. In the center of this, set on a one-plate burner, was a copper pan filled with water. Stained, battered, discolored, it resembled an object straight out of a moonshiner's still. But, as I soon found out, it was important and played a vital role in analysis.

Our days began at seven a.m., when we stepped out of the elevator onto the fifth floor, which was to become my domain for the next nine years. In the summer, our entrance was greeted by a blast of such hot air as could only be described as coming from the deepest part of the earth. This temperature continued for the entire summer and made working very uncomfortable.

Orientation was a catch-as-catch-can. I was given an enamel tray which no doubt began its life as a baking tin in the kitchen and was "promoted" elsewhere when its baking use was exhausted. In this instance, it provided a receptacle for syringes and other paraphernalia for drawing blood, venous and otherwise. Other items on the tray were shot glasses to hold oxalated blood to keep it from clotting, tubes for serum, etc. Prominently in view was a yard of rubber tubing used as a tourniquet. Before using our expertise on patients, blood-drawing was on a volunteer basis. Since volunteers were in short supply, our expertise (and I use the term loosely) was questionable, but patients seldom realized just how

inexperienced we were. (On the other hand, they might have strongly suspected.)

Returning from the floors with our samples, we started our real work. A drop of blood on a special calibration slide placed under the microscope showed the red and white corpuscles. There were no computers, no adding machines to tally the millions of red cells and the thousands of their brethren, the white cells. A pencil, paper, and headwork tabulated the critters. A smear of whole blood on a slide, stained and examined under the scope, revealed other creatures, some normal, some otherwise. For blood chemistry, whole blood was reduced to a thick, jelly-like substance, then filtered to a clear liquid. Then the copper kettle earned its keep. The filtrate, combined with another chemical, was placed in a tube and set to boil for eight minutes. After a cooling period, we provided other additives, and then comparison with normal findings proved the results. To this day, I shudder to think how many diabetics gave up the ghost while waiting for the results of their blood sugar done by the above Folin-Wu procedure. I have been told that in recent years a drop of blood goes into a glucometer and the results pop out. So be it.

One of the tests using serum was the Wasserman for syphilis. It was a long, drawn-out affair, but surprisingly accurate. Positive results were rare, probably due to a society which had not yet reached the low level of today's morals. Supposedly, only lower social class members were afflicted with the above, so when a patient of high standing tested positive, the results were scoffed in disbelief by his attending doctor. Later, the disbelief turned to belief when an autopsy on the individual turned up calcified placques in the lining of the aorta, a definite sign of the disease and the primary cause of death.

After completion of the tests, results were recorded and carefully reported on the patients' charts. After completion of the above, clean-up time followed. Tubes, glassware, syringes, and needles had to be washed, and blood had to be discarded. If the current clean-up lady called in sick (sick of this dandy little chore, no doubt), any lab tech unfortunate enough to be idle at the time was designated. Obviously, there were never any volunteers. Washing the dozens of tiny tubes seldom put any of us in ecstasy; sometimes we wore rubber gloves, since it was awkward to handle the tiny items. Syringes were not easy to clean, nor were the needles, which were later sharpened on stone. Sterilization was done by a monstrous piece of equipment resembling an iron lung.

The war years brought changes in the lab. Penicillin made its appearance, and there was no hesitancy among the staff in its use. Previous to this, the only and best recourse was sulfathiazole, but because of its toxicity, dosage was extremely cautious and required daily sulfa blood levels. Another newcomer during this time was the pap smear, named after its founder, Dr. Papaniicolaou. Its initial use was on possible cancer patients, but it later became routine for all females.

I might add a word about an unpleasant but necessary section of our facility, the morgue. It was definitely not the elite place seen in the "Quincy" television series. Located at the end of the emergency entrance, its size was comparable to a walk-in closet. No windows, no ventilation, no fans. Student nurses who were jammed in the tiny area did little to ease the situation. The only one not gasping for air was the cadaver.

It was the attending pathologist's job to perform the unsavory task. In his absence, Dr. English is to be remembered and respected for doing it. Organs were removed and refrigerated to await the pathologist's final diagnosis. Strangely enough, at rare instances, there was no discernible cause of death. Skeptics may wonder how no obvious cause of death is evident when a body is examined "stem to stern," but it is possible. Death can be from a disease discernible only by microscopic examination of blood or tissue, which was generally not available from cadavers in those days. Lab personnel

facetiously termed these deaths G.O.K. (God only knows). Professionally they were often labeled "heart disease."

We worked hard in the 1940s. There was no overtime pay, nor recompense for night calls when we were called from sleep two and three times a night for "stat" blood work on emergency patients. There was no air conditioning, no fan, and only one elevator. The emergency one was located too far from our quarters, so our option, if the elevator for our use was held up elsewhere, was to mush-mush five stories down and usually five stories back up to our domain. What kept us from ending up in the closet-like room adjacent to the emergency room, God only knows, but we were a hardy, dedicated crew. Back then, we had to be.

SELLING NEWSPAPERS IN JACKSONVILLE

William L. Defrates

When I was nine back in the early 1930s, my father said, as he had to my brothers and sisters before me, that I was old enough to get a job and earn a little money "to help out here at home." By this I took him to mean that I should sell newspapers since there were no other jobs available for nine year olds that I was aware of.

Not that he would ask for or even accept any money we earned on our own, but it sort of eased his mind to know we had pocket money when he could not come up with a dime to give us for the movies or a nickel for a candy bar.

I was to become a street hawker. The home delivery routes were all taken by the big, rich kids who owned bicycles.

"Be a hustler," advised my father, a word I have hated ever since.

The only equipment needed was a canvas bag which the company provided. The paper sold for three cents a copy. We could keep a penny from each sale, and turn the balance over when we checked in at 6:00 p.m. On Christmas Eve, we could keep the entire proceeds as a bonus.

I sold papers on the public square for several years. It was an engaging way to spend a boyhood. There were always new friends to make, old alleys to explore, and friendly customers to talk with.

In the taverns, the men sat at tables drinking beer and playing cards. Tobacco smoke fouled the air. If one of these gents bought a paper, he would usually pay you with a tavern chit. This was a small cardboard ticket with the tavern name printed on it used in lieu of cash. You could redeem it in trade only. So if you got one of these in payment, you could exchange it at the bar for a hot dog or root beer. That meant these refreshments cost you only three cents. Not a bad deal even for those times.

Sometimes a car would pull up, and the driver yell for a paper. You had to dash out into the street to take it to him. My brother was once struck by an auto doing this. Thankfully his injuries were slight. The risks were high, but usually the driver was in a hurry, would not fumble about for pennies, but would toss you a nickel or a dime with a nonchalant, "Keep the change, kid," and drive off. So our pay was augmented by these "tips." If you ever got a quarter for a tip, you felt wealthy. It was like selling twenty-three papers at one time.

Whenever a news story broke of wide public interest, the paper would bring out an extra. This happened several times while I was a paper boy and the large bold face headlines still live in my memory.

I recall the single largest day's sale I made occurred hawking an "extra." The event was not of immediate interest, like "TORNADO STRIKES JACKSONVILLE," or sensational, like "LINDBERGH BABY KIDNAPPED," but only the story of

a tragic accident involving two much loved people. The headline read, "WILL ROGERS AND WILEY POST KILLED IN AIRPLANE CRASH." I sold 117 papers that day and with my tips earned two and a half dollars.

Will Rogers, the cowboy philosopher turned actor and columnist, was a down-to-earth, plain-spoken man. He could spin a yarn while spinning a lariat. His droll humor was a tonic for America's blues. Wiley Post, one of our earliest aviation heroes, made the first solo flight around the world. Their deaths brought tears to many eyes.

There was an alley just north of the *Journal-Courier*. The building then faced South West Street. Next to the alley was Sid Caldwell's barber shop.

Sid was a balding gentleman with a pot belly. When there was no patron in his chair, he used to leave the shop and watch the newsboys fistfight in the alley. We always arrived about fifteen minutes before press time, but since mechanical breakdowns almost daily caused a forty minute delay, we had quite a bit of time to kill. We either pitched pennies or held fistfights.

There was nothing organized in these bouts. We simply decided whom would take on whom, and had at it. Bloody noses, blackened eyes, and loose teeth were all part of the game. Only one bout at a time was the rule, and all but the pugilists stood on the side and cheered or jeered.

A good crowd gathered for these affairs. Many folks waited anxiously for the press to roll, so they would have first shot at the Help Wanted Section. The year was 1935. They usually watched the kids slug it out.

One day a customer said to Sid, "Do you know what's going on out there? Somebody's going to get killed. They ought to put a stop to it."

Sid nodded. He knew that the alley was a public place and no law was being broken that he could tell. "But I can't have my customers complaining," he thought. "Might not come back. And I need the business."

Sid went around the corner to Lane's Book Store, which sold everything under the sun, including books, and ordered two pairs of the largest size boxing gloves that he could find listed in the catalog.

When they arrived, he called us together and said, "Boys. There's been complaints. Now if you're going to fight here, you've got to wear these." He opened the box and held the shiny maroon-colored gloves in front of us.

He was greeted by a chorus of "All rights" and we rushed to examine and feel the new gift that had entered our lives. We knew what they were, though none of us had ever owned a pair. No matter that there was only one size for all. No matter that you could flay away at your opponent all night and inflict no more damage than you could if you had a couple of pillows tied to your hands. They were beautiful and we loved them. We began to feel like professionals. All that happened was that the sharp whacks inflicted on cheekbones turned to dull thuds, and blood ceased to flow in Sid's alley.

As a reward for showing up faithfully, and treating customers kindly, the paper office would assign ideal spots or corners to deserving newsboys so they wouldn't have to walk constantly to sell their papers.

I was finally assigned the corner of East State and the public square. Elliott State Bank stood on one side and the Piggly Wiggly market on the other. This was the largest and most popular grocery store in town and it was my spot exclusively. No other paper boy could sell there. I planted myself in front of the market's main door and made my pitch as the customers entered or left. My sales picked up at once, and I was pleased that I could always duck into the store to escape the heat and buy soda pop.

My Utopia was soon to end, however. A new seller on the force began to stalk me. He would stop every evening around

five o'clock, plant his body squarely in front of me, and proceed to inch forward. I would step back but he would press forward until eventually I would find myself standing in the gutter.

He was a head taller than I, with broad shoulders, and a head like a bull. He wore a perpetual sneer on his lips and carried a perpetual chip on his shoulder. The look in his eyes dared me to knock it off so he could flatten me. In this respect, he anticipated Dirty Harry by about fifty years.

I never knew if he resented my assigned advantage or was just enraged by my puniness. I think it may just have been hate at first sight. He never said anything—just crowded me, pressed me.

My humiliation and anger grew every day. By the end of three weeks, I could take it no longer. On a sweltering August afternoon, he appeared as usual and advanced toward me.

In front of the Piggly Wiggly stood a lamp post, and attached to it a green, metal mail box. I do not remember doing this, but I must have removed my paperbag and draped it over the mailbox. I lowered my head, and with all the force I could muster, I rammed it into the pit of his stomach. I saw the startled look in his eyes, and heard the "oomph!" as the wind went out of him, and he toppled over backwards. I straddled his body at the waist, and began pummeling his head with both fists. When I was pulled off him a few minutes later by shocked passers-by, his face was a bloody pulp and he was spitting out teeth like watermelon seeds.

In a very short time, Kack Carson, the paper's circulation manager was there. Someone had phoned the paper office to tell them that two of their paper boys were killing each other on the public square.

We were both fired on the spot. Our papers were taken, and we were told to check out at the office. But when I got there, a man was explaining that he waited in his car every night for his wife to get off work at the bank, and had witnessed the bullying and provoking I had been subjected to.

"I don't see how you can blame the little kid," he told them. "There's just so much a body can take."

The upshot of it was that I was given my job back, while The Hulk lost his for good.

"If you ever have a problem like this again," Kack said to me, "you come to me with it. We can't have the paper carry a story about one of our boys murdering another." And he winked at me.

When my father had heard all the details, his reaction was typical.

"You're a real tiger," he said. "Maybe you can use some of that energy splitting kindling and weeding the garden."

But even my father's sardonic approval could not daunt my soaring spirit. Like Tony the Tiger, I felt "G-R-E-A-T."

BRINGING ELECTRICITY TO RURAL WESTERN ILLINOIS

Ralph Eaton

Rural America has changed dramatically during the twentieth century, as we all know. The transition from the use of horses to tractors and automobiles as the primary source of power and transportation was perhaps the greatest change. Free rural mail delivery was also a great advance. The improvement of farm-to-market roads was another. Hybrid seeds and commercial fertilizers were significant improvements, too. But perhaps no development brought about such a dramatic change in a short period of time as that of making electricity available to over 5,000,000 farms across the USA. I had a very small part in that activity in our region, and it was a very exciting time.

Electricity is so available to all Americans today that it is taken for granted unless we experience a power outage, which

at its worst is a very temporary inconvenience which someone else fixes for us. Electricity is today the primary energy source of our world, and we are highly dependent upon it. But during the first one-third of the twentieth century, rural folks all over America overcame the dark by using coal oil lamps and lanterns, and before that, tallow candles. They cooked and heated their homes by burning wood and coal. They could not move from one room to another after dark without carrying their light with them. I can recall when coal oil lamps and lanterns were replaced by gasoline ones, making a brighter light. But, this was just a few degrees better and only a few brief years before rural electricity.

The great improvement was initiated on May 11, 1935. On that day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into being the Rural Electrification Administration, later to be called the REA. This established a ten-year program for "lighting up America" and authorized a fund of $410,000,000 for the first five years, from which loans could be obtained for installing rural electricity lines.

It became the responsibility of the rural people themselves to initiate efforts to obtain these loans. One such group of interested farmers—around 450 of them—met at Quincy, Illinois, on April 20, 1938, and formed an organization which they named Adams Electric Cooperative. At a subsequent meeting, they engaged a construction firm—Monroe Electric Company of Chicago, Illinois—to build the power lines. By June of that same year, over 500 farms in Adams County had electricity! This rapid success created additional interest. Adams Electric Cooperative decided to expand into Brown and Schuyler Counties. My father, located in Schuyler County, signed a membership and paid his $5 dues on September 15, 1938. His minimum monthly service rate would be $3.50 per month. Construction in that area was to begin in the spring.

And so it was that this nineteen-year-old applied for a common laborer's job with Monroe Electric Company, which had set up headquarters at Camden for this phase of their operation. I was told that before I could be hired I must have a Social Security Card. Social Security? What was that? I had never heard of it. I was told to obtain one through a U.S. Post Office, so I went to the little post office in Huntsville and, sure enough, obtained a small cardboard with a number on it, and I was all set!

I was called to start working around mid-March of 1939. I was issued two long handled shovels—these were *really* long, about eight feet—with wooden handles about two inches in diameter. The blade on one was of an ordinary shape, with a point. I later learned that this was referred to as a "banjo." The other shovel had no point, being rounded. But it was also bent. It was like nothing I had ever seen, and it didn't look like it would do much. It was called a "spoon," and I soon learned how useful it really was. I was to be paid a minimum of $4 per day for eight hours, and I was going to dig holes for the tall highline poles. We were expected to dig at least eight holes per day, but if I could dig more than eight, I would receive a bonus of 50¢ per hole for them.

I climbed onto the back of a flatbed truck with seven other fellows, each of whom had a "banjo" and a "spoon." We were taken a few miles into the country where we were dropped off along a road one at a time, each by a stake on the bank driven earlier by the foreman. Each stake was marked with the depth to which the hole was to be dug. Most of the "in line" holes were to be five-and-a-half feet deep and about eighteen inches in diameter. If the line of the poles was not straight, some holes had to be six feet deep. If the highline was to cross a road or make a sharp bend, the hole was to be six-and-a-half feet deep. When we had finished a hole, we would shoulder our banjo and spoon and walk past the seven other fellows to the next stake. Since the poles were a considerable distance apart, this meant a walk of about three fourths of a mile. The foreman usually had gone elsewhere to do something after dropping us off. The first

couple of days were a real learning experience, but we soon became quite proficient.

I don't recall all of the members of our work crew, and of course, there were some changes, but I do remember most of those who stuck with it all spring. There were the two Agans boys (Ora and Tom) from Camden, Sterling Vaughn from Camden, Herschel Anderson and Bill Irwin from Brooklyn, Frank Croxton from LaPrairie, and myself. Sterling Vaughn was my age; the Agans boys were a couple of years older. The others ranged upward to Mr. Croxton, who was, perhaps, in his forties. He was the stabilizing influence in our group. I can remember Tom Agans and Sterling Vaughn setting a heavy pace as the days went on. Each wanted to dig the most holes. They would run, with their shovels on their shoulders, from one hole to the next, usually over a half mile. Of course, they would get a closer hole to dig, which would make *our* next one farther away! I could not keep pace with them, though I tried. Some days I could dig nine or even ten holes, but I can recall Tom Agans getting as many as twelve in one day.

We got other assignments as well. We spent weeks clearing trees and brush from the right of way. I lost a wristwatch (my first one) while cutting brush along Crooked Creek east of Irwin. I searched and searched after work that night, but to no avail. We also helped set the poles and tamp them in. The flatbed truck had an A-frame attached to it, so as the pole was hoisted by the A-frame, three or four of us would guide the base into the hole. We also set anchor braces after the poles were in. These holes had to be dug at an angle. We would go to where the stakes were set, angle the hole toward the top of the pole, then drop in the anchor and rod and hit the anchor to spread it. These anchors were not the type that twisted their own into the soil—they were wider and were set deeper. Even today, I can remember the location of a few of the holes that I dug and the anchors that I set.

Work went rapidly. By late June, most of the common labor work was done. All that remained was stringing the wire and hooking it up to the houses, which had to be done by union labor. Most of my crew had other work to go to. Many of them farmed. Monroe Electric moved their office from Camden to Camp Point. There was still some labor type work to be done in Adams County, and I was willing, so they kept me on.

A husky lad from Camp Point and I were made a crew of two. He was a year older than I and had red hair and freckles, but his name escapes me. We were provided an old pickup truck, a map of the area, and some tools. Our job was to finish out "problem holes"—those that couldn't be dug with a banjo and spoon because they were usually solid rock and often on a hillside. They had been skipped when the regular digging was going on. So, we used dynamite on most of them. We would take a long iron bar with a chisel tip on it and work a hole in the rock deep enough for a stick of dynamite. We would set that off, then clean out the debris and start another dynamite hole until the post hole was deep enough. Most of the debris (rock chips) had to be removed by hand. If you have never hung your head into a hole filled with dynamite smoke, I can assure you that it is a good way to get a splitting headache. Also, I shudder when I recall that we banged around in that old pickup with a box of caps in the glove compartment and a box of dynamite in the rear! And, in preparing the dynamite, we used to insert the fuse cord into the cap, place the cap inside our mouth, and crimp it on with our teeth. It's a wonder I'm around to tell about it!

The two of us would complete from two to four holes in a day, depending on how much rock there was. There were enough of these to keep us busy for four or five weeks. By early August, there was no more common labor work, so we were laid off.

In the meantime, during July, the lines had been completed to my folks' home and the power had been turned on. What a thrill! But, like most people, my folks had been

conservative in wiring their home and didn't provide enough outlets. They had no real idea of the many ways that they would be able to use this wonderful new miracle. It was a completely new experience for them.

Gradually, many of the drudgeries of farm life began to fall away. As farm families could afford them, many "miracle gadgets" began to fill the home—even the barn! The quality of life on the farm had taken a giant stride forward.

DISEASE FREE SEED CORN

Robert Little

It was early in March, 1922, when my mother, my dad, and I moved from the town of Macomb to my grandmother's farm about five miles north of town. Dad had to quit his job as a rural mail carrier because of failing eyesight, and I was happy to start farming. During the summers before my grandfather died, he had taught me how to farm, and I had just completed two quarters at the Teachers College in Macomb. I was nineteen years old and ready to start my life work, which was soon centered around seed corn.

That first year I picked seed corn out of Grandmother's corn crib, looking to see that the germ in the kernel was bright. I did not germinate it, but it grew and made a good stand. A close neighbor, E. J. Wetzel, was selling disease free seed corn at ten dollars per bushel. He showed me how to make a germinator and what to look for after the corn germinated. So, I made a box about ten inches wide, a foot long, and six inches deep, and I lined it with metal so it would hold water. Then I got Mom to cut up an old pair of overalls into six inch squares and hem two opposite sides. I stuck wires through, and when folded, they would lie in the box with the wires resting on the sides of the box. Next, I nailed two $\frac{3}{4}$ inch square strips of wood down the center of a six inch board, spaced about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch apart, and when I folded the cloth squares, the folded center fit in the groove between the strips and made an easy place to put the kernels for germination. Each cloth held fifteen kernels or five ears, for three kernels were taken from each ear. Then I made crates to hold the ears. They were just wide enough, long enough, and deep enough to hold seventy-five ears of corn. There were five rows of fifteen ears. Each row was separated by a strip of cloth nailed at one end. We always started at the same end and reversed the procedure when testing.

When the germinating box was filled with fifteen folded square cloths, each with a row of fifteen kernels, I wet them thoroughly with warm water and set the box on the warming oven, over the cook stove. In about ten days, the corn would be several inches above the top of the box and ready to be tested. When the cloths were spread out, the entire root system was visible as well as the molds on the diseased kernels. The three most common diseases were diplodia, fusarium, and aspergilis. Diplodia had a white mold, fusarium had a pink mold, and aspergilis had a black mold. When testing, the corn was put in the three grades: No. 1, being disease free, No. 2, which was slightly diseased, and No. 3, which was dead or badly diseased and was discarded. The No. 2 grade was only used when the No. 1 was all planted. Sometimes, just to make sure that we were testing correctly, a re-test was made of the No. 1 grade. Every time the roots were clean, white, and vigorous, it gave me a good feeling of confidence and satisfaction.

About 1926, the McDonough County Farm Bureau built a new office building with a full basement. In part of the basement, they made a corn germination room to test patrons' seed corn. The temperature and humidity were controlled. The purpose was to test for disease. Ernest Runkel was hired to manage the project, and I was hired to help since the project only operated in the winter months. The method of testing was

different from mine as three feet square frames were used to hold the kernels. All the frames were wet down daily. The temperature was kept at 85 degrees, and in about ten days the corn was ready to test. The crates to hold the ears were the same as the ones I used at home. A pocket knife with the end of the blade broken off made a good tool to extract kernels.

In those days farming was done with horses, and farms were much smaller than they are now. Therefore, each farm required less seed. Also, the rows were farther apart and the plants farther apart in the row. Most corn was planted with a wire which had buttons spaced about thirty-eight or forty inches apart, which tripped the fork on the planter to drop two, three, or four kernels. By the use of a wire, the corn was planted in hills the same distance apart and farmers prided themselves in making straight rows crossways to the field. The purpose of cross rows was so the corn could be cultivated both ways and that would do more good killing weeds.

After two years helping test corn at the Farm Bureau, Lawrence McGrew, a farmer near Adair, purchased an abandoned school house in the town of Vermont and converted it into seed corn storage. He built a germinating room similar to the one in the Farm Bureau building and hired me to test the seed. I worked two winters at Vermont, and then a bad fire destroyed the building and put Mr. McGrew out of business.

Hybrid seed corn was coming into use at about that time, and the need to test farmers' seed was over. Hybrid seed corn is gathered early in the fall and artificially dried down to where disease does not grow and is not a problem any more.

I planted my disease-free seed alongside hybrid corn but it never yielded as much, so I got a job selling hybrid seed. In my life, at least, the era of disease-free seed corn was over.

A DAY'S WORK IN CORN PICKING TIME

Arthur Hawbaker

I well remember corn picking time in the early 1930s, when I lived on a farm in Lee County, near the town of Scarboro in northern Illinois, with my mother, Ethel, and my older brother, John. My day was long, and the work was hard, but I was proud to be a farmer.

The day started when my alarm went off at 4:30 a.m. I got out of bed, lit the kerosene lamp on my night stand, and got dressed. I carried the lamp to the kitchen and placed it on the table where my mother would use it to prepare the family breakfast. From there I went to the lean-to, which is where my mother did the family washing. We called it the "laundry room." In that room there was a lantern hanging on a nail. I would light it and go out to a small building called the "cob house," which held corn cobs which were used to start the fires in the cooking stove and heating stoves in the winter. I would take the milk pail, milk strainer and pad, and milk can from the cob house and carry them out to the barn. It was a red barn about sixty feet long with a wire stretched from one end to the other inside. I would hang the lantern on this wire and move it along as I went about the task of milking. I cleaned the manure from behind the cows and went around in front of them and put down a generous supply of ground corn and oats to each. I would then be ready to do the milking by hand, which yielded about two gallons of milk per cow.

By the time I was through milking, the cows were through eating, so I gave them a big forkful of timothy and clover hay. They liked that! I then poured the fresh milk into the strainer, and threw the strainer pad into the milk can. The milk can went into the horse water tank by the windmill, where it was cooled by the time the milk truck came to pick it up later in the morning. I would go back to the barn then to take care of the eight head of horses we owned. I fed them several ears of

corn and some oats and cleaned out the manure. Then I would curry and brush the team which I would hitch to my corn picking wagon after breakfast.

My mother would have breakfast ready by the time I was done in the barn, so I would go back to the house to see what was on the menu for that day. There was always plenty to eat: bacon, eggs, homemade bread, oatmeal, and coffee.

After breakfast I was ready to go to the field to pick corn by hand, so I would take my lantern and go back to the barn where I would get my team of matched sorrel mares ready for the day in the field. By the time I was ready to go to the field, it would be daylight. I put the harness on the sorrels and bridled them. I would then take them outside and hitch them to the wagon. The wagon was wooden-wheeled, had a forty-inch-high side, and was ten feet long. On the righthand side of the box was a "bang board," which was three feet high and went the full length of the ten-foot box. Next, I put the team astraddle of the wagon tongue. On the front of the horses there was what was known as the neck yoke, with a ring in the middle. I put the end of the wagon tongue through the ring on the neck yoke to hold the tongue up. Then I went back to hook the team to the whippletree, which is on the back end of the tongue. On each end of the whippletree there was a singletree. I would hitch each mare to one of the singletrees, and I would then be ready to go the field, so I climbed up onto the wagon and drove out there.

It was about daylight by then, so I put my team astraddle of a row of corn stalks which had already been picked. To pick the corn, I used a husking hook, which I put on over a glove on my right hand and fastened with a strap behind the palm of my hand. To pick an ear of corn, I grabbed it at the butt end, then I drew the hook towards me across the center part of the ear. That motion cleared the husks from that side. Then I pulled the husks down on the other side of ear with my left hand, then grabbed the butt of the ear in the wagon against the bang board. The horses pulled the wagon along the rows as I moved through the field.

I picked eight rows of corn eighty rods long, which is about fifty bushels, from daylight until about 10:00 a.m. The wagon was full then, so I drove the load to the corn crib where I would unload it with the elevator. This machine was held in place by iron stakes driven in the ground. From the machine there was a tumbling rod which connected to the bottom of the elevator to make it operate to unload my load of corn. Also, there was a hoist which raised the front of the wagon up and down so the corn slid out into the elevator. I hitched my team to the "horse power," where they went around in a circle to operate the elevator and the hoist. After I emptied my wagon, I unhitched my team from the "horse power" and backed up to the wagon. Then I was ready to go out to the field to pick the next eight rows of corn. I got those rows picked and was unloaded by 4:00 p.m. and would be ready to do my evening chores in reverse of the morning order.

It was almost dark by then, and I would be ready for a good home-cooked supper. After supper, we would listen to the radio or sometimes go into Scarboro to the General Store that my Uncle John owned and sit around and talk to friends about the events of the world. At about 9:00 p.m. it was time to go home and go to bed. Tomorrow would be another long day.

A WOMAN'S WORK ON BUTCHERING DAY

Lucille Ballinger

When I was a girl growing up in the Depression days on a small farm near Womac, things were different than now. Better in some ways, worse in others. There were six children in the family, three boys and three girls, besides my parents,

Clara and Otto Klaus, and we lived in a four-room house. Throughout the year there were several big work days at our home—for apple butter making, threshing, and butchering, among other activities.

My dad butchered several times a year, but the big butchering day came always on a weekday, when from six to eight hogs were killed. Being the oldest daughter, I was always kept at home that day to help Mom. That did not please me because if we had a monthly perfect attendance at school we were given a little pink certificate. Then after so many of them, we were given another bigger booklet that even had a ribbon down the middle. I loved these and looked forward to them, but it was just expected that I stayed home on butchering day to help. I never asked questions or argued about it, for we only did as our parents told us to.

Prior to butchering day one of my jobs was to scrub the board floor with a lye substance that had been left in the bottom of our soap making big black iron kettle and saved for the floor scrubbing. A big scrub brush was used for this. The board floor had to be very clean as the ladies who came would all see it, my mother said. When the big day came, we got up early in the near zero temperature, and we knew we had a big job ahead. A dinner was always enjoyed by the large crowd of neighbor men, women, and children. By night, my floor that I had scrubbed so hard on was a total mess. It is hard to keep from dropping small bits of meat. My heart ached as I realized that on Saturday it would have to be rescrubbed, but I never disclosed my thoughts.

Our rooms were small and so crowded at times. I hoped and prayed that when I got married there would be more room. I did not blame my parents; it just was that way. We were a happy, close family, and my dear dad had a pleasant way of explaining many factors that made them easier to accept.

Putting the meat away during the next few days was a real experience, involving lots of hard work. After walking to and from school two miles away, we would help in any way we could. We did this besides our nightly chores of feeding and watering the chickens, gathering eggs, getting in a supply of wood, and carrying buckets of chips and corn cobs. There were also milking time chores our father needed help with. But the fact that we would have lots of good tasting meat in the weeks and months to come always made the extra work worthwhile.

Time went on, and at the age of twenty-one I became the bride of George Ballinger, and we had a home with so much more room than I had ever known. I was very happy. In the Atwater neighborhood, we had butchering days that were very similar to the Womac tradition. The Crouchs, Ralph and Arthur Neighbors, the Groves, George's parents, and the Herschelman families gathered for the work, and it was always a fun day. A tasty noon meal was served to the big, happy, hungry bunch. Much of the fresh meats were used in the preparations. Liver stew was a must, as were breaded brains, sweet breads, and other good things.

On some days butchering went better than others, depending on the weather conditions and the way the hogs worked up. Generally, by 2:30 p.m., two chairs put together in the kitchen held a new, thoroughly clean wash tub full of ground meat, called sausage, that the men brought in. One man, Arthur Groves, our dear eldest of the group, was the one who did the seasoning. His years of experience perfected this job.

I remember one particular butchering day when the men had gotten along great. They had the sausage ground, lard rendered, and much of the meat cut up early. The women had the dishes done and were visiting, swapping recipes, and watching the youngsters, when they decided they would help me can that sausage—probably thirty-five or so pounds, sitting in the big tub. This was always my job for the next few days, and I did not want to do it then, mainly because the jars were in the smoke house covered with lint and cobwebs, as we had no basement, and I also had no jar lids. The little village store at Atwater had lots of them, the ladies said.

Their plea was that I could have it all done with their help on that day. So the lids were bought; the jars were washed, scalded, and sterilized; and every lady pitched in. It was just like an assembly line. Four big iron skillets on the hot wood stove were kept busy until sixty some quarts of good looking sausage were canned. We always saved a lot out so as to send home with each family a big amount of the fresh meat. At their butchering day, they did the same. We were pleased that our canning job went so fast, and was soon all done.

We put the canned meat in a store room, just off the kitchen. We hardly used that room in the winter months as it was not heated. We had a sixteen-year-old girl named Pearl staying with us, as we were sending her to high school because her parents could not afford to. She and I moved the canned meat into the store room, remarking about each box how good that would taste in the summer months.

Several days went by and the weather turned warmer. We began to get a strong odor once in a while, and my husband swore it was a dead mouse, but I looked and found none. One day Pearl went to get some books in the spare room and quickly remarked it was coming from that room. I stepped in and fully agreed.

We found, to our great surprise and disgust, that the sixty some quarts of meat had spoiled. A dead horse would not have smelled worse. The job of emptying those cans was almost unbearable. My husband's stomach was weak anyway, so we ended up burying the meat, jars and all.

What we found out was that all of the body heat has to be out of meat before it can be canned. So, the women's work was wasted that time, but we learned an important lesson—not to hurry a process that had to be done right. And there were other butchering days to come.

WINE-MAKING IN MONROE COUNTY

Al Hartman

When I was seven or eight years old and lived on a farm east of Waterloo, Illinois, I helped my sister, Frieda, stomp grapes to extract the juice to make wine. We took off our shoes and stockings, climbed into the big, grape-filled tubs, and trampled the skins and pulp for fifteen minutes or so.

Several days before, the grapes had been picked off the stems and collected into the wooden tubs. After standing around in late summer temperatures, the grapes were redolent with a pleasant "stitchy" fragrance that stung my nostrils, or at least tickled them a little.

After Frieda and I finished our stomping, Mother strained out the juice through a cheese cloth, and transferred it to twenty-gallon crocks, where she stirred in a little sugar. It had a nice purple color. Mother then covered the filled crocks with clean cloths, and let them stand in the outer cellar for another day or two. The pulp and seeds were fed to the chickens and pigs. As a reminder of the part my sister and I had played, our feet stayed blue for a week!

The juice was later funneled into barrels and my father performed the chemistry of wine making. He used a U-tube vent in the top hole spigots, rubber hose siphons, and bung starters, etc. We had twelve barrels, each about three feet in diameter by four feet long, with three or four iron hoops. They were supported horizontally on a sixteen-inch high wooden rack against the south wall of the arch cellar. We called the cellar by its German name, "gewoelbte keller." The following spring, Father would siphon the nascent wine into a cleaned barrel alongside. It took two years to make wine.

Our arch cellar was under the west side of our house, and it was four to five feet deeper than the outer cellar. Back in the 1920s, the outer cellar had our central hot air furnace and carbide mixing tank for our gas lights. Grandpa built our old

house in about 1870, together with a big barn and a combined summer kitchen and buggy shed. He had come to the USA in 1852 as a seventeen-year-old boy with 35¢ in his pockets.

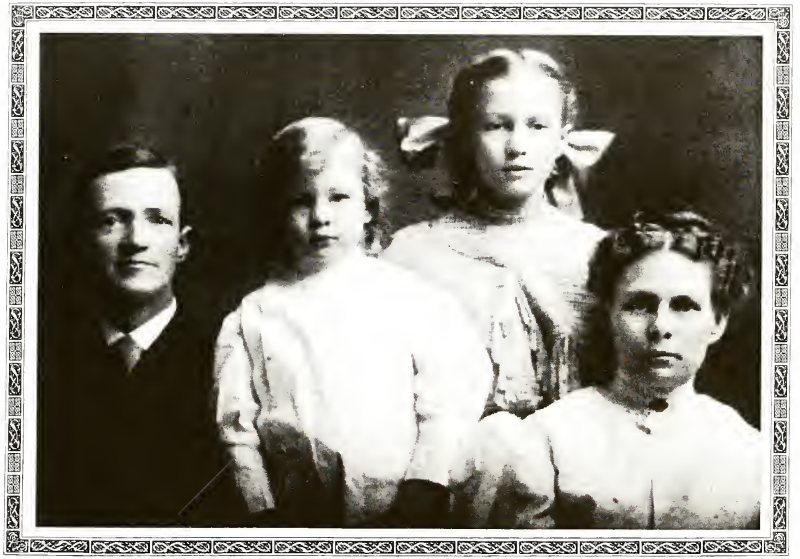
Our vineyard, which Grandpa had established in the 1870s, had eight rows, each 175 feet long. Four strands of wire were stretched between posts at ten foot intervals, on which the grapevines were trained. Most of the grapes were Niagaras, but there were some Concords, and a thirty-foot south row was for blackberries, to make blackberry wine. During the winter, Dad pruned the grapevines, tying them back on the wires, and leaving the one and two-year growths, to bear the coming year's grapes.

Our vineyards and others in Monroe County produced good grapes and good wine, but alas, the national mood turned slowly against the manufacture and sale of liquor. Prohibition was the culmination of widespread, long-term indignation about drinking. Families and communities were appalled by the dreadful deaths and other problems caused by alcohol abuse, so anti-liquor legislation came along as a part of a moral crusade. We had no choice but to comply.

So, our wine barrels were emptied. The staves were knocked out of their hoops, and the barrel ends were split up. The staves and pieces were then stacked outside for firewood. The family wine-making business was discontinued.

Our vineyard nevertheless became a haven for townfolks, who came out when the grapes were in season, to fill their baskets with grapes to make jelly. Finally, after some years, there were no grapes at all. The wires and posts and the vines were removed. Now, there is just a grassy area east of the house.

Sic transit gloria vino!



VI The Values of Mother and Father

THE VALUES OF MOTHER AND FATHER

No institution is more important than the home. Without it operating as it should, America's deepest problems are bound to become increasingly worse. Any lasting solutions must begin in the home, where parents comprehend that rearing their children with sound values is the triumph of their lives, far superseding their own personal plans, pleasures, and inadequacies.

The most grim symptom of the current social crisis is the breakdown of the consensus system of values that had united Americans, more or less, in a sense of what is right and true. Such accord, though diminished in the present era, remains the political and social hope of the nation, although dedicated attacks at the consensus values, more accurately identified as the American Creed, have born bitter fruit.

If the home fails to teach the Creed and a process of decision making to use it in solving problems, other powerful educators may very well teach other ruinous ideals. If the mass media, peer groups, politics, and other forces of education are the instructors of behavior and change, an impending crisis could damage seriously the American experiment. Among the forces that can parry this thrust are the home, church, and school, but the failure of the home to teach the Creed properly will doom the school to failure and make the church's job more difficult.

Mom and Dad are the critical part of the answer, as they raise their children with love and discipline; and, as a cardinal principle of parenting, teach them to be good, decent people sharing the values and behaviors demanded by the Creed. Every child should be taught the moral worth of people; freedom, coupled with the restraints necessary to maintain it; equal opportunity (not results) for all; a union one and inseparable; representative government; the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; freedom of religion; sanctity of the historic family which stays married; honesty and integrity; the work ethic; responsibility; dramatic limiting of government; an equitable system of law; due process; free economic enterprise within the bounds of fair play; belief in the preeminence of the American republic with the willingness to participate in the democratic process for improving it; help for those absolutely unable to assist themselves; murder and cruelty as wrong; violence as wrong; honoring mother, father, and family; fairness; courage; willingness to forgive; disdain for arrogance; and loyalty to family, church, and nation.

Time was when families labored day and night to teach the planks of the American Creed; today such efforts are much diminished. But for parents and youth affected by the Great Depression, this consensus accord was a major goal. The memoirs in this section allow a wonderful view of why mothers and fathers were admired and loved, and they should surely be instructive to parents today as to the values their progeny should learn.

The youth of the baby boom, now parents, are often playing to the tune of a different drummer. Such homes as those portrayed in the memoirs are crucial to both the children and the nation, for the family is the cornerstone of society, and its legacy can provide a dimension of incalculable value. It can promote a sense of continuity and stability. It can teach the values by which to live. In the end, only the family is important; most everything else tends to become irrelevant. When hopes and dreams fade, and plans go awry, and sickness and misfortune intrude, and old age casts its lengthening shadows, the family will remain the great refuge. This the writers of the memoirs shared. What splendid parents they had.

Alfred J. Lindsey

THE INSTRUMENT

Jeanne Berman

Our newcomer rabbi is an ecumenical activist, bringing fresh ideas into our conservative congregation in Peoria. Periodically, he invites members of outlying Christian churches to attend our services. They come as strangers to see how the Jews worship, many never having been in a synagogue before.

They listen awestruck as Rabbi points out the *bimah* (where the cantor or reader officiates); the Sacred Ark (where the Torah, the parchment scroll of the Pentateuch, the Book of Law, resides); the eternal light forever lit directly above.

But the cynosure, as eyes gaze altar-ward, is the front wall, Hebrew letters naming the Ten Commandments and the *Shemah*, the watchword of our faith. Rabbi points and states: "One of our late members designed them freehand. Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one," he intones quietly. "Those who read know their significance—as do those who can't read the Hebrew," he adds.

I saw those letters being created. I saw the artist, my father, toying with his writing paraphernalia and his *Siddur* (Hebrew prayer book) when I came to fix his lunch everyday, as he was already ailing. Seeing him working with Hebrew calligraphy was no surprise to me, for he had designed the Hebrew inscriptions on many headstones above the graves of traditional Jews in Hebrew Cemetery, for many wished them in Hebrew and English.

"What're you doing?" I asked him.

"They're for the new Shul" (synagogue), he replied proudly. "Nobody asked me, but, when they see them, I know they'll use them."

Yes, the Rabbi, board members, and architect approved, and the patterns were sent to Chicago to be cast in stainless steel. Papa never saw the finished product, as he passed away before the synagogue was dedicated in 1958.

Father was nineteen, a young lad in Pajuris, Kovno Guberneh (Lithuania), when he was tapped to serve in the Czar's army, Cossacks riding into the distant *shtetlech* (villages) of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—satellites of the Fatherland. Because of quotas to be filled, many a youngster was shanghaied to serve in the Russian army.

No misfortune was too great to endure in attempts to escape the Czar's monolithic tyranny. Records exist of self-mutilation of a hand, a toe, an eye, an ear; nocturnal fleeing from home; buying a *muzjik* (peasant) substitute if one had the wherewithal; and brothers changing surnames, pretending to be only sons, for single sons were immune.

But it was Papa's destiny to go "see the world" he could never have dreamed existed. Now he would fraternize with countless countrymen from the farms, the mines, the steppes, and the mountains; they were often ignorant louts, drunken satyrs, unkempt peasants, and hardly a man among them could read or write.

At first, Father spoke only Yiddish (the vernacular of Hebrew and the language of the land) to the Jewish recruits, for he knew no Russian. When he prayed each morning in a silent undertone enunciating every word, he was noticed by others—as he was when he abstained from certain camp ribaldries.

Already his assignment was taking a different slant. Without aptitude tests, those who watched picked him to be trained as a musician! Thus he would be spared the mountain maneuvers in merciless weather, marching in mud or snow, and lying on the frozen ground to repair the huge vans for those lucky enough to ride in them. He would be spared caring for horses and mules or animals to be slaughtered; spared carpentry, blacksmithing, preparation of huge vats of food that looked, smelled, and tasted like garbage; and even arms handling for, as it turned out, Papa never carried a gun.

Now when they put a slim metal horn into his untutored hands, he was completely bewildered. When he heard the

melody, the piercing tone of the cornet, he was electrified! His heart jumped into his mouth. The blood rushed like a waterfall through his arms and to his cheeks. Him—they were picking him to play, to learn to play this magic reed: to make music, to be a soldier who would carry a cornet instead of a gun!

Thus he started his education, that inexplicable, growing, aching longing whereby his mind would encompass new stimuli and develop into a serviceable instrument of its own. The cornet opened a new world of training and learning. How different from the cattle-like existence in the *shtetl*! What satisfying fulfillment to practice toward a unified goal with others! It was the university he had never been privileged to attend. It was his enfranchisement from the locked dam of ignorance.

Now he was learning to read and write a strange new hieroglyphics: black circles with tails on a five-line score that said the same thing to anyone who could read music. How he loved the music: the melody, rhythm, mood. It was transforming his very soul!

But there were also other things to do in the barracks: trimming the hair of his buddies, sewing buttons on their uniforms, and mending socks and even the shoes of his friends. He also wrote letters home in Hebrew for his illiterate brothers. He was orderly and proud, and those around him recognized the gifts in his hands! Thus, he became the confidant of his regiment.

One night Yitzhak, a fellow Jew from a neighboring *guberneh* (county) crept into his barracks. "I'm afraid," he said, "to go on maneuvers tomorrow. I couldn't stand it yesterday, so I'm going to try to get out."

Papa shook his head helplessly. "Ah," he sympathized, "if I could only help you! What the officers say, we do," he added resignedly.

The next day a soldier's boots and coat were found outside the barracks. In the snow about fifty feet away, they found Yitzhak unable to move. A short time later he died, a recruit of less than a year, a casualty of war though not a shot had been fired.

On the side of the mountain, a grave was dug. They stripped the body, for usable clothing could not be "wasted." Sans shroud, sans coffin, sans ceremony—for there was no Hebrew chaplain, nor *minion* (the required body of ten worshippers), Yitzhak was placed into the frozen earth.

Next day the infantry would begin its trek up the majestic Caucusus. Soldiers with their instruments would be riding in the huge wagon transports, hardly aware of the little Jew's demise, all except Papa. While others slept, there was work to do. A marker was needed for the departed. Outside the barracks, he found a piece of wood. He remembered a short crayon near the baton the director used to mark off players' positions; he also remembered the black paint used on the wagons. These supplies had to be collected.

Though he had never before printed an *aleph* (first letter of the Hebrew alphabet), with the help of his tattered *Siddur* as guide for letter formation, he created a memorial to his buddy Yitzhak. Flanked by the Star of David, he patterned in Hebrew the identifying words of a tombstone:

SKOLZIK (family name)
Here lies
Yitzhak, son of Abraham
December 20, 1903
The Hebrew blessing: May he rest in peace.

Then he painted the inscription with black paint to show against the wood. In nocturnal silence, he hammered the board onto a support to place into the ground. Then he said his lonely *Kaddish* (mourner's prayer) for his fallen comrade. That was the origin of Father's gift in designing inscriptions for the headstones in our Hebrew Cemetery.

The next day the troops and vans moved on, proceeding near the newly dug grave. For those who could read, there it was: a manmade monolith on the panorama of the Caucusus. Soldiers had fallen before along the path of moving troops, but internment was a perfunctory task with the deceased unsung and forgotten. To Father, his artwork signaled his farewell to an unfortunate buddy. Russian peasants had no birth certificates, so Father's statement was a cry to the world to say Yitzhak had indeed lived and served!

As the captive troops passed by, some stared unmoved. Only the Jews could read it as they marched slowly by—that is, if they could read, walking over the frozen earth or squashed like sardines in the huge lumbering vans. Those who could not read, but recognized the distinctive letters of their culture, wept as they passed, or wept over their own illiteracy, for the Czar they served had made them servile, ignorant paupers.

Horses' hooves, marching feet, and wagon tracks soon flattened the marker and furrowed the earth. Only in Father's heart would Yitzhak lie undisturbedly. Recurring snows, then melting ice blankets, would water the earth and decompose the muddy debris until the grave and the years would become one with the mountainside. Only Mosheh, the compassionate youth who would one day be my father, knew that Yitzhak Skolzik had once served the Czar.

There Papa's talent was born: he would be the *instrument* for communicating that exquisite feeling of love for his fellow man! Compassion breeds it; learning nurtures it; and art, the recognition of indestructible beauty in the universe, seeks the medium for its expression.

Yitzhak would forever be the symbol for hatred of oppression, and as his grace was left forever behind, Papa was galvanized into one cataclysmic decision: HIS FUTURE WOULD BE IN THE NEW WORLD: AMERICA! Unlike some of his compatriots who had eluded service, Papa had broken the confines of the *shtetl* forever! He would follow the cornet's clarion call to freedom!

But tonight the officers must dance.

POP

Bob Hulsen

My sisters called him "Daddy," but Mother, my brother, and I always called him "Pop." Hundreds of citizens in western Illinois and eastern Iowa referred to him as "Brother Ben" or "Reverend Hulsen." And everyone thought he was an aggressive, dedicated personal evangelist.

Benny Hulsen was one of eight children of German immigrant parents at Depue, Illinois, whose father died when he was four years old. Helping to support his widowed mother dictated the end of his formal education at the 4th grade. A grocery wagon driver at twelve, a Depue Zinc Works employee at fourteen, a paper mill worker at Marseilles at sixteen (when his mother died), and a Marseilles Spreader Company employee at seventeen, Ben already had a long work record when Deere and Company brought the Marseilles Spreader Company to East Moline and he came along. He was an apprentice machinist, and on that limited salary he married Maggie Sullivan, the waitress daughter at Mrs. Isabelle Sullivan's boarding house. She, who had finished 6th grade at Moline, was twenty-one. Somewhere in his youth, Ben had attended an evangelist meeting conducted by the famous Billy Sunday, where he promised to read one chapter of the Bible every day. Although not a church member, his daily Bible reading later prompted him to begin memorizing Scriptures. He once confessed to knowing over 3,000 passages—and not only the words,

but also the book, chapter, and number of each verse. Folks often referred to him as "The Walking Bible."

The writings of St. Paul inspired Ben, and he determined to be a personal evangelist. His work was handing out gospel tracts in public places, explaining Christianity to fellow citizens, and visiting the sick and disabled in nursing homes and hospitals. He was the leader of a group that persuaded Reverend Kortkamp to move from Alton to Moline and that also built The Full Gospel Temple. In 1935, Ben was ordained by the Full Gospel Assembly and licensed to preach and perform associated duties. He called himself an Interdenominational Minister.

Although with no pastorate, he was often the last and only friend of the outcast and forgotten. Mortuaries knew him and called him to officiate at scores of funerals for transients, accident victims, ex-offenders, people with no church affiliation, prostitutes, and elderly citizens with no survivors. He was often at the bedside of fellow citizens helping them and their families face the prospect of death. At his urging, hundreds changed their lives. Many joined churches of their choice, and he baptized dozens of converts in the Green, Rock, and Mississippi Rivers.

In 1937, he volunteered to assume leadership in restoring and revitalizing the Edgewood Baptist Church in Rock Island. By 1943, both the building and congregation had been rebuilt. However, because of a lack of academic credentials, Pop could not qualify as a minister in the Northern Baptist Convention with which the church was affiliated. An accredited minister was chosen.

Until almost middle age, Pop never used his given name, Bennard. Because it is unusual, he suspected that his German parents may have intended Bernard or Benjamin. One happy day he discovered that the author of the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross" was George Bennard. "The Old Rugged Cross" was Pop's favorite hymn and, in 1944, when he was ordained by the Southern Baptist Convention, he proudly became Reverend Bennard Hulsen.

The last 37 years of his employment were as a skilled machinist at the Locomotive Repair Shops of the Rock Island Railroad at Silvis. He retired when eligible at age 62. Having lived on the edge of poverty for much of his life, retirement was very special for him. It was a mark of success. More importantly, he could devote himself full-time to what he termed "The Lord's Work."

Fortunately, Pop and Mother were able to purchase a mobile home and park it at one of the fine mobile home parks in Mesa, Arizona. For the last fourteen years of his life, Pop spent his winters in the Valley of the Sun and his summers in East Moline. He soon became a familiar figure at Mesa's hospitals and at nursing homes in the Phoenix area. He also handed out tracts in public places. Hundreds of retirees waiting in their cars for wives to do the shopping met Rev. Bennard and had conversations and prayers with him.

He conducted Sunday church services at the Mobile Park Recreation Center, and he and Mother participated in the programs residents devised to entertain each other. In one affair, Reverend Bennard was instructed to come dressed as a hobo and was given a small harmonica on which to practice. It struck him like a flash of lightning. In his youth he had learned to play a harmonica, but had not had one in his hand for over 50 years. He played at the party and so pleased his neighbors that they presented him with a new larger and more versatile instrument. Frequently, disabled residents of nursing homes wanted to hear and sing old familiar hymns. Reverend Bennard now had an instrument to supply both the pitch and the tunes. Astonishingly, he played all that Christian music with a single beat. He was perhaps the only person who played "The Old Rugged Cross" and other hymns in ragtime!

How proud he was to be a free American! There were no days when he did not pray for the President of the United States

and his helpers. Although uneducated, Pop understood democracy and the value of justice, private property, and human freedom. And he was fearlessly committed to helping others. As a poverty-stricken youth, he had learned to fight and had then taken up the art of boxing, so he was not afraid of the Devil—or any man. He would go any place under any circumstances where he thought there was a soul to be saved.

Pop's great heart stopped in Mesa on October 31, 1970. Friends remarked that he must have had a glimpse of Heaven because even in his coffin his face wore its familiar smile. Significantly, among the hundreds who attended Memorial Services in Mesa and Moline, even his physician, the minister, and the undertaker wept. Pop was a minister with an inspiring sense of commitment and a man who influenced countless others—including me. He has always been my special hero.

MY BELOVED PARENTS

Floyd M. Lowary

I found the picture today of my father and mother on their wedding day. I knew the picture was around somewhere because, as a younger person, I had seen it, glanced at it, maybe commented on it, and then put it away.

Now, today, at eighty-plus, I study it, and realize that I could and should have been a better, more appreciative, prouder son. I put myself in the position of these fine people who had little opportunity or need for education, who lived remotely from what we consider sophistication or at least modern life style, who had all the emotions and feelings of people today, and who, dressed as they were in this picture, were completely out of their element.

And as I look in fond remembrance at the photograph, I see my father, standing tall in his three button, too large suit, with a high starched white collar and a white tie, hair combed and parted exactly in the center of his head, slicked shiningly and correctly down, handsome and clear eyed, as any "Senior of the Month" in today's college newspaper. Nor, can I help noticing, knowing in later years his habit of unpolished shoes, the highlight on his left shoe, and, knowing his shyness, wondering where his right hand was. Was it holding the left hand of mother? Was it joining his other hand behind his back? His serious countenance and his piercing dark eyes indicated that he took his marriage seriously, and resolved to do his best now, and in the future, to be a good husband.

My mother looks small and shorter than I realize she ever was. She never did gain a lot of weight, in comparison to her husband's later weight of 325 pounds. I wonder who helped her arrange her glowing, reddish hair (from which my pre-gray came) in such a beautiful and becoming way? Who made the arch of flowers and pinned it in place? Who helped her so neatly roll her naturally curly hair? Maybe new love makes all things possible, but I doubt that Dad was much help. Her long white dress (which I never saw) must have been made stitch-by-careful-stitch by a friend to fit so neatly and charmingly on her mature twenty-four-year-old body, and she, too, stands tall beside her man. Her high neckline and single strand of white beads hints at her character, spotless and stern, we can be sure. The white shoes were probably laced with white laces, high over her ankles. Her hand, later to be twisted by arthritis, shows long joints indicative of past and future usefulness. These hands did much for me, many times, not appreciated enough then. I am so sorry.

The people who married on that long ago day probably never again appeared as they did that day. But the values that they brought to their union continued for all their lives. Simple honesty and character were the only things they knew, and, as

I remember it, there was never a lock on any door of our house because my parents expected everyone else to have their honest values.

The same honesty and character displayed by them became a part of my daily life and continues to this day. I must confess that I have not always kept their standards and frequently have been less than they were, but to this day, through no credit to myself, I retain many of the character lessons learned from the uncomplicated integrity of Mom and Dad.

My wife and I successfully attempted to pass on the ideals and truths in our children and grandchildren, but I am sure we are not the example, or the teachers, our parents were. We do have the satisfaction that these descendants of the second and third generations realize and appreciate the truths these wonderful people lived by. I sit gazing at the wedding picture, and I remember the mom and dad who provided a magnificent example grounded in love and utter concern. I remember—and I am humbled.

THE CUT GLASS PITCHER

Evelyn Witter

Mama's cut glass pitcher which had been added to the items to be auctioned was the next item to go under the auctioneer's hammer. It looked elegant on the stand, as it played coquettishly with the sunlight streaming through the west window. It should never have been placed with the auction goods. If I could only have returned from Europe a day or two sooner, it would not have been put up for sale!

As I looked at the pitcher, I thought of the time Mama poured special punch for the congressman. She told him that she had organized three groups of women with the state who would work for his election because of his interests in schools and libraries. The Congressman said: "I'm impressed with your leadership." As Mama poured another cup of punch, the sparkle from her eyes and the warmth of her smile were reflected in the curved handle of the pitcher.

"Do I hear $40.00?" the auctioneer asked.

As he lifted the pitcher high into the air for everyone to see and went on extolling its beauty, I thought of the time Mama had promised to take me to a matinee. That day I napped longer than usual. When I woke up, Grandpa, who lived with us, told me Mama had gone on without me.

Fury unfurled her sails within me, and I stormed around the house, kicking one door and slamming two others. Finally, in the dining room, the light-catching cut glass on the sideboard darted light signals to me. Moving in lightning flashes, I placed two bowls, a vase, and two compotes in upside down positions on the floor. The last piece I handled was the cut glass pitcher. I laid it on its side in a helpless-looking position.

When Mama came home, I stood between the kitchen and the dining room, legs astride, arms folded, and face frowning. She looked dazedly at the cut glass strewn on the floor, slowly removing her hat and placing it on the table. I waited for an avalanche of words. Mama began talking. "I'm sorry I broke a promise," she said. "I didn't realize you'd be so angry. When I came to take you, you were sleeping so soundly . . . oh, you poor little dear!" I ran into Mama's open arms and buried my face in her neck. Even as I sobbed, I enjoyed the soft smell of her perfume and the hard protective shield of her arms.

"Do I hear $50.00 for this fine old pitcher?," the auctioneer's rasping voice cut into my reverie.

"Fifty dollars!" I repeated to myself. That was the exact amount Mama gave me for my sixteenth birthday. That was travel money. I was going to travel to my Aunt Minnie's for my vacation. Mamà also gave me a birthday party. I invited four of my favorite friends, and Mama poured lemonade from the cut

glass pitcher. As she poured lemonade from the sparkling pitcher, she made sure that each girl was made to feel welcome.

How gracious she was when she said to Sue Englehart: "This is for you, Sue. Your mother tells me you are doing well with your music lessons. She is very proud of you."

"And here's a glass of lemonade for you, Daphne. I never knew you could sew so well until I realized you made the pretty dress you're wearing!"

"And this glass is for you, Helen . . . our famous gardener."

As each girl was given an honest compliment, she glowed like the glass pitcher. I remember the sunlight caught the colors prismed by the cut glass and made a halo around the rim of the pitcher.

"My last bid was sixty dollars." The auctioneer's voice was distorted over the P.A. system. "Do I hear seventy?"

Lights glinted off the pitcher and the bidding continued.

On cleaning days, when Mama submerged the cut glass in high soap suds and used the toothbrush to clean deep into the cuts of the glass, she held the pitcher up to the sun and she dried it with a special lint-free cloth. She turned the pitcher this way, then that way, in order to enjoy each sparkle of color.

It was on these days that Mama enjoyed telling how Grandma brought the cut glass pitcher all the way from Czechoslovakia wrapped in a quilt. Many things had to be left behind, but Grandma would never part with the pitcher that a fine craftsman in Prague had made especially for her. It was fun to hear Mama tell the story because her face flushed pink with pleasure like a rose opening to the sun, and her voice became as animated as a meadowlark flinging his song to the sky.

"Do I hear eighty?" the auctioneer asked as a loose connection in the P.A. system's electrical hookup cracked his voice into shattered bits.

I watched the auctioneer's assistant turn the pitcher around and around. An arch of prisms reflected on the opposite wall.

The sparkles brought back the memories of a sparkling night. It was a night when the stars twinkled in a blue velvet sky, snowflakes fell like gems in an already white landscape, and I was bringing my college sweetheart home for the holidays to meet Mama.

Bill and I were as tense as performers waiting for the curtain to go up. Mama served a turkey dinner and studied Bill as intently as she did the stock market.

But Mama hid her thoughts about this young man who could become an important person in our lives. Mama hid behind a mask of small talk. Even I couldn't see under that mask. And when the silver water pitcher was empty, Mama went to the sideboard and took out the cut glass pitcher to be filled with fresh ice water. It was then I knew she approved of Bill.

"Now I want to hear a bid of ninety-five dollars? Do I hear ninety-five?" the auctioneer persisted.

"Yes," I said.

As I returned to my seat clutching the cut glass pitcher, I murmured: "Oh Mama, I love you so."

HATTIE HOWARD

Glenna Lamb

Certain images inevitably form in my mind when I think of my mother. I see a dug-out cellar, walls lined with tiers of shelves, each laden with glass jars filled with fruit and vegetables canned for our food supply during the winter. I remember the huge garden plot, the planting, weeding, and hoeing to

raise the vegetables. I recall her patience in teaching "us kids" to help with the gardening. I see the hot steamy kitchen where the canning took place: jars sterilized on a wood burning cook stove, then filled with the vegetables and processed for something like three hours, and then submerged in boiling water in a canner or copper wash boiler. I can still see the look of pride and satisfaction on her face when she looked at the full jars properly sealed at the end of a day of canning. Two of her specialties were peach pickles and saccharin pickles made from baby cucumbers. I'm sure her canning was to her, as it was to me, an art.

I remember the feel of having my chest rubbed when I had a cold with an ointment made from goose grease, turpentine, and mentholatum. The ointment was penetrating and really did help, but equally healing was her tender touch and concern. I also remember a cough syrup made from wild cherry bark, horehound, glycerine, and perhaps some other ingredients. I believed in it as a child and, for years after I was grown, I always wished for mother whenever I was sick.

I can see "new" dresses, made from my two older sisters' discarded ones for almost every Christmas program at school. They were pretty and never resembled the ones from which the cloth came. I know that many times she sewed well into the night in order to have the dress ready on the day it was needed.

She had a wonderful sense of humor. I'm thinking of a time when she had made me a new pair of pajamas. When I tried them on, they were too tight in the crotch. She cut a piece of cloth and attempted to set it into the place that needed expanding. It didn't turn out the way she had hoped. In fact, it sort of resembled a pocket between my legs. I can still hear her laughter as she looked at her creation.

Sunday afternoons were a day of rest and spiritual refreshment for her. She spent most of every Sunday afternoon reading her Bible. Her days through the week were so full—up at 4:00 a.m. and busy until 8:00 p.m., with an hour to relax with family before going to bed at 9:00—that she didn't read her Bible on weekdays. Still, I've seen her on her knees in prayer on those days, and Sunday afternoon was her time to spend with God. Her relationships to family and neighbors reflected her deep faith in and relationship with God.

At the cemetery on the day she was buried, at least three people came to me and told of acts of kindness she had done for them. One man told how she had come to their home every day when they were all sick with the flu during World War I. She had brought homemade soup and did whatever else she could for them. Another, more recent neighbor told how she had organized and taught a neighborhood Bible class in their community, and how much everyone had enjoyed it.

My mother was not a businesswoman. She never bought or sold a field, but, except for that, I think she came as close to fitting the description of a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 as anyone I've ever known.

What were her values? I would sum them up thusly: love for her family, deep faith in God, belief in hard work, acceptance of life as it came to her without complaint, belief that one must do the best one can with what one has, kindness and concern for others, acceptance of responsibility for herself and her family, a strong sense of morality, and a good sense of humor.

I have thanked God many times for giving me the very mother that He allowed me to have.

A TIME TO REAP

Arvis Christian

First and foremost, he was a farmer. He always had been, and, if he had any choice in the matter, he always would be. He was a farmer—a black-dirt, Illinois farmer—and he loved his land, his life, and his family, not necessarily in that order. Actually, I think, he loved them all pretty much the same, which was very much indeed.

He loved the damp, dark smell of the earth as it broke under his plow, the sound of the wind in the corn, and the warm stillness of the barn on a winter night. And he loved the wobbly-legged little calves, the evening light laying long and level across the land, and each new day that dawned crisp and clear over his world.

He was good at what he did. His fence-rows ran arrow-straight. His corn stood tall and proud beneath the prairie sky. His roofs held tight against the prairie winds. During his long years as a farmer, he saw the old ways change; watched horses give way to tractors; saw kerosene lamps replaced by electric bulbs; and learned about hybrid corn, hi-yield beans, pesticides, herbicides, and all the technicalities of modern farming. But the basics remained the same. Newly plowed earth smelled dark and sweet, the evening light lay level across the land, and the corn still sang softly in the wind.

Too soon he grew old. Arthritis knotted his fingers and gripped his knees, making climbing off the tractor sheer agony. He had trouble with his stomach, and his heart began to beat erratically. It was all getting to be too much. He sold out and four hundred acres dwindled to ten. Then he got diabetes and lost his leg, and even ten acres were too much.

He was in a nursing home now. As nursing homes go, it was one of the better ones. The staff cared. They kept the rooms clean and their patients as comfortable as possible. Since the place was on the edge of a small town, he could look out and see the corn growing green in the sunlight and sometimes, in the spring, before they turned on the air-conditioning and closed all the windows, he could catch the faint scent of newly plowed earth. But he was old and tired. His farm was gone and so was most of his family, and I don't think he loved his life very much any more.

And I also think that somewhere beyond all the golden streets and marble palaces of the Celestial City, God has a back forty. Or maybe, being God and being Heaven, it's closer to forty thousand, I don't know. Anyway, I'm sure that somewhere up there, He's got some acres of green and growing things where He can walk when the evening is cool and find a minute's respite from all the cares and turmoil of the worlds.

And I think one evening about that time He was taking a look around, and He noticed the corn needed plowing and beans were full of weeds. The oats didn't look too healthy either.

And so He said, "I have got to get me an Illinois farmer up here, one of the real old timers who grew up with a pitchfork in one hand and a ball of binder twine in the other. I need a man who knows when to sow and when to reap, who can lay a furrow straight as an arrow and mend a machine with two bolts and a bit of baling wire, and who sets corner post so it will stand forever.

He stroked his beard for a minute and took another look at those weedy beans and He said, "Now, there's George Fuchs lying down there in the Shabbona Nursing Home. He's not been doing too well lately, had a lot of pain and trouble, and he's getting just too tired to fight any more. And every night he dreams he can walk again, and he's shocking oats or making hay or maybe just sitting on the back porch watching the corn grow. I need a farmer and he needs a farm."

And then God leaned down and said gently, "Come on home, George. The corn needs plowing."

MOTHER: MY BLESSING

Norma Altum

That my dear mother had a strong faith and admirable courage, I knew by her actions and her little sayings. These sayings proved to be so valuable to me. What I remember most was her getting up early in the morning and working until late at night. There were always things that needed to be done. Though life treated her harshly, she never said, "What's the use," even after having been left alone to raise four children.

After our father had passed away, she was overwhelmed with doctor and hospital bills. Neighbors and friends wondered what she would do, how she would raise us. She said, "Where there is a will, there's a way." She was really putting her faith to work, as she didn't have any insurance or other financial assistance.

The answer for her was her utter faith in God. She saw to it that we had a way to Sunday School, even when our father was in the hospital. We had to do without so many things, but the important things we had. We wore hand-me-down clothes, half-soled shoes, and cut our own hair. When we would often complain about doing without or that others had things we didn't, Mother would tell us that we had what we needed, and it was what you are that counts. When we complained about working so hard. Mom would say that it would build character, whatever that was.

My memories of my mother are of her being a happy and caring person. When she was sad, she would go off by herself, and when she came back she would talk to us, telling us about our father. When I hear about the Prince and Princess on television or read about them to my granddaughter, I think I have already heard the best love story of them all. When my mother would share her courting days with my father, she told how he played the fiddle for house dances. At one of the dances, he asked her to dance while someone played the fiddle for him. She was so happy because he wanted her to go with him when he played at other dances. He loved playing "Turkey in the Straw" and "My Pretty Red Wing"; they were Mom's favorites, too.

She would tell of going places in his horse and buggy. What a spirited horse he had! One time the horse was spooked by a bobcat and took off at a full gallop. My father finally got the horse under control. How brave he was. We liked listening to these stories and wanted them over and over again. Mom would tell us tales of her early days with our father and, later, how they worked together. She also sang songs to us. All of these gave us self-esteem and pride in our heritage.

My parents rented a two-hundred acre farm, and that is where we were born. Mom said it was our Dad's wish that she keep all the children together after he was gone. He wanted us to stay on the farm, as we could help when we got older. That way she could be with us. We got to do a lot of fun things, too. We would visit neighbors and go to community school meetings, along with other activities that didn't cost money. We enjoyed picnics, hikes in the woods, and fishing. Oftentimes, when we wanted to go someplace, we would have work to do and Mom would say, "no." If we asked again and she knew it meant a great deal to us, she'd say, "Let's go; the work will wait for us." We would all work hard and get caught up later.

We were not always obedient, and Mother had her hands full with us. Neighbors would tell her that she should find another man so she wouldn't have to work so hard. She said she had one good man, and that was enough. She told us again about her promise to our Dad to raise us children, and said that that is what she wanted to do. She was unwilling to take a chance that another husband would possibly mistreat her children. The value of keeping a promise is still very important to our family.

We loved having company for a meal. Mother always said, "Food tastes better when you share it with someone." She

would often fix food for neighbors who had sickness in the family, saying that they had been so good to us and that they needed a helping hand.

There were other activities that were special. I remember the joy of quilting bees. We'd have a quilt frame in the crowded living room. We caught up on all the news, and we'd always have a special dessert. Everyone was so proud of her tiny stitches. Then there was butchering day. I remember rendering lard in the big black kettle with a wooden paddle. The casings were cleaned for the sausage, and someone would season it to make it tasty. Mom would fry some of it, so that we all could taste it. Sausage had to pass the taste test. I don't imagine that the children were much help, but we got to share in all the excitement. Threshing day was another fun time. Neighbors came—the men to help in the fields and some of the women folks to help with the cooking and baking. They would bring their children along, and we had great fun playing and helping some.

My older brothers helped with the farmwork. Then war was declared in 1942. This was very shocking, especially if you had boys of draft age. One of my brothers could have been deferred to help on the farm, but both of them wanted to go and do their part. As a result, Mom decided to sell out and move to town; she was around forty-five years old at this time.

After moving to town, mother took in washing and ironing, but she could barely make a go of it. Then she got on at the A.B.C. plant in East Peoria making washing machines, but, as in so many plants, they converted to the war effort, making bullets. Mom painted the inside of the shells. When the war was over, she was laid off.

Though she wondered what she would do next, Mom had a strong faith and said, "God watches over us." Later, she got a job at the American Distillery in Pekin. She was worried about whether or not she would be able to do it, but she said, "If they can do it, I can learn it too," and she did, working there until she retired.

I believe mother lived life one day at a time. She kept her faith, worked hard, and was kind to people. She wasn't one to complain, but often said, "Life is too short." She gave us what she could: her magnificent values, memories of our father, self-esteem, the desire to share with others, the importance of being thankful, and the value of a strong faith. These were the ideals she instilled in us without the knowledge that she was doing so—and they have sustained us for a lifetime.

Even now, in my golden years, I get a warm glow knowing that my mother loved me enough to work hard and sacrifice so much to raise me. I didn't know what values my mother was teaching me at that time. I was really wishing for an easier life. But what I got from that dear woman has blessed me for all my days.

Blessed is he, or she, who has made footsteps worthy of others to follow. I've been so pleased to have had her footsteps to follow, and I taught my children those same precious values, and they, in turn, have taught them to my grandchildren. Mom has given us all a magnificent legacy.

THE MAN WHO HAD NO VALUES

Shirley Lewis

When I first thought of writing a story about my father, I thought, "Just what values did my father really have?" The reply was, "He had none." I then asked my sister, who is six years younger than I, this question. She thought awhile and said, "He didn't have any." We shared the same impression of a person who had to have influenced our lives greatly.

This struck me as so sad, that a man lived and died, leaving so little impression that we, his children, found no particular value or legacy in his lifetime. Several days passed with this in my mind and, finally, I sat in the shade of an old tree. I got comfortable and began making a list, a list of memories.

My Dad was a big man in stature, a tall Irishman with a barrel chest and long legs. He was Kojak before his time. He had soft brown eyes, no hair (which he had lost in WWI from being gassed), but he was still handsome without his thick dark hair. His eyes sparkled at times, especially if he could find something to tease about. His language was not for me to learn; truthfully, he could take an ordinary word and twist it to sound like the worst swear word. He drank and periodically became violent. At these times, he refought a war in France, in which he served as a young man barely seventeen. Everyone became his enemy; his nightmare again was lived. He remembered over and over again. We call them flashbacks now, but it is nothing new to any young man who has ever gone to war.

In the late 1920s, he married my mother, started a family, and the Depression came. He lost his home, worked for a little, and became embittered. He eventually worked for the railroad which was not to his liking either, for he was a farmer at heart. It was about this time my memories of him began.

Before I write of these memories, I must say that I cannot write only of my father because my mother, who was as tiny as he was large, controlled him completely—or tried. She guided him, this lovely, stern Methodist woman, as a tug boat steers an ocean liner. She was the flip side of the coin. They were totally opposites, yet completely dependent upon each other. She yelled; he sulked. He bellowed; she smoldered. There were no dull moments in our lives. Love? Hate? I don't know what kept them together, but stay they did. They kept their commitment to each other. They were both such strong personalities.

My memories go farther back than when I was six years old, but that was the age I remember most clearly. We had moved into an old rambling house about a half mile outside of town, no running water, an outhouse, and an old black kitchen stove that burned cobs, coal, or wood. The problems were many: cold bedrooms I especially remember; sandstorms when the sand blew under the doors and window sills; snowstorms that iced us indoors; and the hot, hot summers of the 1930s which have become legendary. It didn't seem like much to work with, I'm sure.

In the Depression years, many people turned back to the land to survive. That is what my father eventually did. He worked on the railroad daily, or nightly, with his head stuck out the window of a steam engine, in the heat or bitter cold, but the land was what kept us going.

Dad was inventive. One year he decided we should have running water in the kitchen at least. He built a large platform on the side of the house, put a huge rain barrel on it, screened the top, piped the rain water into the house to a faucet in the sink, and, lo and behold, he gave us running soft water. My, he was proud. No matter that it was always cold; we could add heated water from the stove. No matter that it drained into a cornfield. No matter. Another time, he installed a generator which gave us electricity. It did need to charge a lot, so listening to the radio was done only at certain times. We certainly learned many lessons in economy growing up with my father.

Of course, we had a large garden which was his world. Having been raised on a farm, one of six children, he knew what he was doing, but sometimes went to extremes. We carried water in buckets in a wagon to water the plants. He checked the size and color of the tomatoes and cucumbers daily. He grew everything. We had kraut made from big green cabbages put in great stone jars in the storm cellar, cucumbers became delicious pickles, and all vegetables were canned. Melons, beans of many kinds, radishes, onions, peas, even big fat tomato worms,

abounded. Corn often came from a field next door. We had a cow that could really kick, and the air turned a shade of blue when she connected with one of my dad's body parts. But she was worth it, as the milk provided cottage cheese, butter, and thick heavy cream for our table.

Chickens were always part of this life. A very mean white goose brought gales of laughter from Dad; he never warned anyone that the goose was mean, better they should learn on their own. He raised ducks, but didn't hesitate to eat them, beautiful as they were. He made a point of the beauty but also made their ultimate use clear. Even my pet rabbits were occasionally threatened by a twinkling eye, but he did spare them, preferring to hunt wild ones. Our Thanksgiving dinners were always duck or goose. These were very good, especially when we knew Dad had been out in the fields hunting. We always loved to watch the ducks and geese migrate and kept a sharp eye open for the first flight, that beautiful V formation in the sky.

Years passed so quickly, and two things have remained in my memory—not big important impressions but particularly good and humorous ones. The time came when he decided he did not like going to the outhouse and sitting on a cold seat. Did he put an indoor bathroom in the house. NO. NO. NO. He came in one day and said, "Turn that switch on before you go out, will you." Well, I did, of course, and went on out to that little house where morning glories climbed up the lattice work. There, in the corner on a shelf, was a space heater, aimed at the seat. It made sitting there warm and cozy! We all sparkled and doubled over with laughter at that one.

If I could take a picture of this man to keep for the rest of my life, it would be when he was in the garden digging potatoes. This, indeed, was a production. He had his pitchfork, I had a bucket, barefoot kid that I was, and away we went. I guess we Irish consider potatoes the staff of life like some consider bread or rice, so when he put his foot upon the fork for leverage, and the earth turned over, rich and brown, revealing those beautiful spuds, his smile was something to see. He couldn't wait to get to the next hill.

I had been so wrong. I had taken his values for granted, so well-integrated into daily life, so woven, so casual they were. He taught me survival in times of trouble. From him I learned tenacity. I learned the love of nature and the workings of the creatures in this world. I learned love, humor, jaded as it was at times. I learned love of heritage, as his family had been early pioneers with their own school, church, and extensive farmlands in the Illinois river valley at one time. The graveyard is still there, and I see our name on all the many markers and stones. I also learned sorrow and sensitivity. He often hurt for himself and others; he was sometimes very kind and giving to any in greater need.

My father was a product of the social-economic conditions of the country at that time. He was, in some ways, a heroic casualty of World War I. There had been this war to end all wars, prohibition, the stock market crash, and the Great Depression. While some were jumping out of windows, not able to face adversity, my father dug in his heels and went to work. His edges were a little rough, but, like a diamond, there was a great deal of strength and beauty beneath those edges. He and his kind were the solid foundation upon which this country continued to thrive. I can only be proud of him and pleased that I have some of his strengths and many values.

MOTHER WASN'T SUPERSTITIOUS . . . BUT

Betty Doubet

I knew it was Monday! The minute I woke up, I heard Mother (Neva Smith) at the door of my brother Robert's room loudly proclaiming: "Robert, get up. It's Monday. I need your sheets to put in the wash. Get up now or I'll pull those sheets right out from under you." Then I would hear her starting for our door. I shook my sister Jean and we hopped out of bed. From past experience, we knew that there is no more sleep after the sheets are pulled off the top and out from under us.

On washday, it was my job to help with our breakfasts, Dad and Mother having long since eaten. Robert wandered out muttering about a bad dream he had about a mad dog. Mother looked at him and said, "Don't tell it before breakfast! If you do, it's a sign it will come true before it's nine days old."

That shut him up. But I told him about my dream of Grandpa Nelson. He had passed away several years ago, but I still remembered him quite well. "Dream of the dead and you will hear from the living," Mother quoted from somewhere or other.

Then she looked at Jean: "You have your blouse on wrong side out. Come here and I will help you change it." As Mother worked with the blouse, I heard her tell my sister to say "bread and butter" before they put it on right. It's a sign she would have bad luck all day if she didn't say it to break the spell. She said it.

Robert wanted an egg for his breakfast. When I reached for the salt shaker, it slipped from my fingers and fell to the floor just as Mother came through the kitchen with her armload of sheets.

"Did any of that salt spill?" she asked me.

"Yes, a little, but I'll wipe it up," I answered.

Mother came back sharply, "Be sure to burn a little on the stove top. It's a sure sign if you spill salt and don't burn some, you'll have a fight with someone before night."

Well, I really didn't mind a little row with my brother now and then; however, I dutifully burned a little just to make things go smoothly. After all, it was Monday.

After breakfast, I washed our dishes and wiped off the table. It was fun to flip the dishcloth around a little with no one to watch. Just as it flipped once too hard and landed on the floor, Mother came in to make the starch.

"Did that leave a damp spot on the floor?" she asked as I quickly retrieved the thing. Well, it had been "flipped" quite a few times and because there wasn't much water left in it, there wasn't a visible spot.

"No, but what difference does that make?" I inquired.

"If you drop a dishcloth, it's a sign you're going to have company. If it leaves a spot, they are dirtier than you are. Just an old superstition, but you never know," explained my Mother. It's a good thing that dishcloth didn't leave a spot because, soon after, our neighbor, Villa Jones, came to the door, and I knew she was immaculately clean.

Villa asked Mother if she could borrow our potato fork. She explained that husband Bill thought she could get a few new potatoes to cook with the peas she had picked that morning. Mother invited her in; they sat and visited for a few minutes and then went out the back door to get the fork. This must have been quite a challenge to Mother. Villa must go back through the house and out the same door she had entered, a sure sign of bad luck if she didn't. On the other hand, if she carried the fork (or any tool) through the house that was a sign of death in the family. She solved it very neatly by getting Robert to carry that fork out to her car. As Mother and Villa came through the house, I heard her explaining that she really wasn't superstitious, but. . . .

The rest of the morning went pretty well. Dad came in and, as we sat around the table eating our "washday dinner" of goulash and cottage pudding, he made the remark that he had hitched Old Queen up with the new colt Buster, who seemed to be settling down pretty good.

Mother exploded, "Lloyd Smith (she always called him by his full name when she was exasperated with him) you know that colt's name is Black Beauty. Pearl Murdock told you that when he sold him to you. It's a sure sign, if you change *anything's* name, it will never amount to a hill of beans."

Dad sort of smiled with a twinkle in his eye and said, "Black Beauty isn't a handy name and I'm going to call him Buster. We will just have to wait and see how much he amounts to." Buster became very much a part of our family for a good many years and he did turn out to be a very good workhorse.

Before Dad went back to work, he sat down on the back step and took off his shoe. Mother, thinking he had hurt his foot, went out to investigate. "No, my foot was itching and I just had to take off my shoe to get at it," he responded.

"Oh, Lloyd, you know if your foot itches, that's a sign you are going to walk on strange ground. Do you think it might mean we could go to the Springfield State Fair?" Mother was definitely excited.

"Now Toot (Dad's term of endearment for her), you know we can't afford that anyway and the tires on our old car would never make it."

"Yes, I know," Mother sadly replied. "But you'll go somewhere. Just wait and see."

After dinner, as Mother and I were washing up the dishes, she said to me, "Betty, your dress hem is turned up. That's a sign you will get a letter. If you kiss it before you turn it down, you will get a love letter." Mother smiled and I was embarrassed. I had never had a love letter, hardly knew what one would be, but when she wasn't looking, I quickly kissed it and turned it down. I never got my letter—let alone a love letter.

Mother said her tooth hadn't ached now for two weeks, but she would knock wood for saying that because she surely didn't want it to come back. I had heard that a lot of times—knock on wood or your thoughts will come true.

When we went to the clothesline to bring in the sheets, the breeze hit my ears, and I complained that they were burning. Mother asked, "Is it your right or left ear?"

I said, "My right one, why did you ask?"

She replied, "If your ears burn, it's a sign someone is talking about you: Left for love; right for spite."

Just as Mother walked into her bedroom with her arms full of clean sheets, I heard her call for me, "Betty, come quick!"

I ran to see what was up, and there, on the floor, sat Jean admiring herself in Mother's good hand mirror. "Get that mirror and put it back on the dresser! For goodness sakes, don't let it get broken. Sure sign of seven years of bad luck, if you break a mirror." I carefully took the mirror and substituted it with one of my dolls. She seemed happy and I saved our family seven years of bad luck—I think.

We put the clean sheets on the beds and went out to the backyard to see what my Dad was doing. Piling up some branches that had blown off during a storm, he had a fire going. As we walked around the corner of the house, there was Dad on a ladder working on the eaves that had blown loose.

Robert came running by, tagged me, and I started to chase him; he started to run under the ladder. Mother grabbed him and she sternly admonished him *never* to run under a ladder—a sign of bad luck. (I got to tag him back.)

A bonfire of any kind will draw children. All three of us ran to the fire and began to poke sticks in it. Mother called, "Betty, Robert, Jean, get out of that fire. Don't you know it's a sign if you play in the fire you will wet the bed? We just put on clean sheets."

Well, I was insulted. I couldn't remember when anything like that happened to me or my sister who slept with me.

I just gathered up the kids and we went around the house to play in the swing and the sandbox.

But Mom's delightful superstitious ways only made her more dear. So we watched and waited. What wonderful superstitions would surface next?

After all, it was only Monday.

VII My Experience in High School

MY EXPERIENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL

Schooling has fallen on bad times, as people are increasingly distressed and disappointed with America's education. These strong emotions are, beyond a doubt, unique in the nation's history, and they raise the critical question: Are the schools failing?

The public schools are handy. Owning them, the taxpayers are able to vent their social, political, and theological frustrations by pointing the accusing finger at the institution they can control. Often, then, public schools, particularly high schools, are held responsible for such issues as poverty, racial inequities and prejudice, disappointing test scores, discipline problems, violence, sexual deviance, alcohol and narcotic dilemmas, family dysfunctions, immoral behavior, lack of patriotism, and a host of other problems.

But the schools are only a little culpable, for they are but one of a host of educators, their efforts paling before the force and power of television, adolescent music, movies, crumbling families, humanistic theology, peer group influences, psychological effects, politics, ethnic and racial influences, and socioeconomic factors. Moreover, the authority of the secondary schools is limited (and this is very important) to reflecting the social order financing and thus controlling them. A primary objective of the schools is to housebreak the students for a full and successful membership in the society and majority culture. If the schools have faltered, it is that they have failed to reflect the best of the social order, thus empowering the forces that are in conflict with America's very creed.

The high schools, then, have failed to the degree that the social order has come up short; they are a predictable scapegoat for an ailing nation, perhaps caught in an epochal social change, more surely involved in a time when the very American Way is under siege, as groups and people seek to fulfill personal whims and desires at the cost of what earlier was perceived as right and true.

But what about schooling in earlier days? Was schooling far better in the days prior to and following the Great Depression? An examination of the memoirs is very useful, indeed, in examining these questions.

Whatever the era in history, youth will be youth and focus on fun, and this is as it should be. In this regard, some wonderful memoirs were shared. Dorothy Ross recalled the humor involved in school breathing lessons and chuckled that her fellow band members polished their musical instruments to a high gloss so they could see under her skirt, something she learned many years after graduation. Katherine Cravens was amused when one of her teachers extolled many petticoats as a means of sexual virtue, and Lillian Peterson chortled at an early attempt for women's liberation. Sharing a hilarious memoir concerning a bogus copy of the school newspaper, Ivan Prall demonstrated the mood and behavior of many youth, whether it be today or yesterday, while Anthony Seimer smiled about being hoodwinked in what he wore to school.

Beyond these humorous escapades, however, were the mood and values of the time. Many of the writers viewed schooling as a privilege, a position taken by Lydia Boston and shared by others. To attend school, some boarded in town, while others trod long distances. Martha Jean Wieland identified students as "innocent" and "provincial." The teachers were said to be both insistent and caring, and the courses were demanding. Home economics, practical and useful, were extolled. Cheating was dealt with harshly, but it existed even in the schools of yesteryear.

As they must do to exist, the schools written about in the memoirs followed the values and practices of the time, and the eras represented in this section were profoundly affected by the consensus value system shared by the majority of Americans. Few would argue that these values have not eroded in the

present time. It is no wonder that school was more successful in satisfying the taxpayers, for it mirrored a more admirable social order and system of values. Nonetheless, a cardinal principle of schooling is to select and teach the best values of the current social order, an admirable truth to be gleaned from the memoirs.

Alfred J. Lindsey

PRAIRIE CITADELS

Dorothy M. Ross

After one-room schools, Pleasant Plains Township High School in western Sangamon County seemed truly enormous. I was enthralled by the library—a niche at the front of the study hall. As with most high schools, a certain amount of reading was required, evidenced by book reports; and I was frothing invisibly, wondering how soon I could get at all those books. Heaven was the opportunity to read something more than the daily paper, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and other magazines the mailman shoved in our big mailbox.

High school was more than shelves of books; it was a whole new life for this country girl. Basketball was one of the most exciting activities. Our gym was small, with a stage on one side and a solid bank of bleachers opposite. Boys' basketball games were the highlight of community socializing.

Mother, quite a seamstress, was often commissioned to make the cheerleaders' lined circular skirts and other regalia. With leftover red and blue satin, I dressed a small Kewpi doll that soon became the cheerleaders' mascot. I would run out, place her on the gym floor just before a cheer, then the living dolls did their acrobatics behind her. It was a beautiful and simple world.

My piano/vocal teacher during grade school was the high school music teacher. Even though I was a freshman, I was always involved in the annual Christmas cantata and other musical events. In my sophomore year, I had a lead role in the operetta, with its theme Christmas Around the World. I was in another world because my partner was the senior I had a very big crush on. Representing Holland, we clogged (oh, so woodenly) in wooden shoes. It was then I gained true compassion for Hans Brinker and that other stubborn little fellow with his thumb in the dam. Wooden shoes are not for the weak of spirit.

The end of January was special. First, it was my birthday; second, it signaled the Sangamon County Basketball Tourney. A classmate and I shared birthdays, so we had a combined party/dinner after school before heading for the game. Players, coaches, and male students rode one bus; we girls were allocated to the fan bus. I quickly learned that the most fun could be had near the rear of the big yellow vehicle, away from the lone adult driver. This was where the girls could do the unspeakable: tell suggestive jokes. We were so naive; our jokes, for the most part, tended toward naughty puns. Those we might have been a little ashamed of would barely bring a shrug today, and some we didn't understand anyway. But it certainly made the thirty-five miles seem shorter, and lent us a hint of something we wouldn't grow into for some time.

Some teachers stand out: The principal with his thick glasses; the ag teacher, who was also the leader of the agricultural 4-H Club; and the girls' gym teacher. Also, there was Miss Willie Viola Harris.

Miss Harris was Missouri born; legend was that her father wanted a son and, after being disappointed several times, finally named his last daughter Willie. Miss Harris was short and rather dumpy, and she dyed her hair. Drugstore dyes often left much to be desired, and we never quite knew what to expect as the old wore off and we knew a new bottle would soon be put to use.

But Miss Harris was a *teacher*. She put up with little flack from her students, and they respected her for it. She taught four levels of English, two of Latin, and coached the speech team.

If you wanted to compete in speech, you began by taking her famous "breathing lesson." This consisted primarily, and most importantly, of learning to breathe with your diaphragm instead of depending on your puny lungs. Miss Harris had a sure-fire way to show the difference. Off went the books, papers, and pencils from the top of her desk. On YOU went. Flat on your

back, legs dangling over the end, you reposed on Miss Harris' desk, her hand flat on your lower chest, while you struggled to breathe the proper way. This, she said, was the way orators and singers must learn if they are to sustain tones. At her insistence, you learned to push out your belly because that was the closest spot to your wonderful diaphragm. And, at last, you realized your chest didn't have to heave and rise with each breath. With a little practice, you could push your middle out while your chest remained immobile. And you could breathe. The proper way. Years later, at eighty, Miss Harris was still sharing her talents in Quincy, Illinois.

In March of my sophomore year, my world came to an end. We moved to the other side of the county, to the very community where the county tourney was held, to the biggest basketball floor in the county, not counting the state armory.

But it didn't seem enough. I was leaving fifteen years of friends behind, walking blindly into the hollowed halls of yet another citadel of learning. Williamsville High School didn't even have a Latin teacher, which meant I had to complete my lessons by correspondence with Miss Harris.

It was a school that had won only three basketball games all season, an institution full of students and teachers who might determine whether they like me by the clothes I wore and the things I did. Never mind that I could walk through the unlocked doors of most of the homes of Pleasant Plains and be welcome. Never mind that I, a lowly freshman, had been given select roles in vocal music events at PPTHS. Never mind that I had been a fairly big duck in a little puddle.

WHS seemed an enormous, deep puddle; and I was sure I'd never learn to swim, let alone walk on water once in a while. The first inkling that I might survive came in band. The WHS band was long on small brass, so they didn't need my third-chair talents and the cornet I'd inherited from my uncle. Third-chair was strictly nonmelody, so I'd never practiced much, figuring that in the cacophony the other band members made, they'd never hear my boo-boos, anyway.

WHS owned a baritone horn that wasn't being used, so I ended up in the back row, between the cute JV center/tuba player and the very shy trombonist. The position had other endearing qualities. At last I was playing something recognizable, the wonderful "ta ta ta' ta ta ta" counterpoint notes at the end of musical phrases that everyone could hear.

I tried to keep the chrome of my baritone polished as brightly as my fellow band members' trombones and tubas; the bell on my neighbor's sousaphone was often so shiny when placed on the floor beside his chair that reflections from the overhead lights almost put out my eyes.

It was much harder to accomplish what I had taken for granted before: vocal solo work. Several good sopranos, including Cathy in my class, were already on board at WHS, and I felt pretty much out in the cold. That turned around when my parents joined the local community club where neighboring families took turns providing refreshments and entertainment before enjoying square dancing. On these occasions, I was soon playing for Cathy's solos, and she, mine. We organized duets and trios with talented students to entertain the "old folks"—our parents and grandparents as well as all our neighbors within a five-mile radius. And, with the sharing of talents at these small events, I soon realized that a new home had been found.

In those days, we high school students lived in special worlds all our own; we didn't have our own cars, and prom night transportation relied on many fathers sharing the family car keys for the occasion. Prom gowns were often homemade, while rented tuxedos and limos were unheard of. Floral corsages were treasured for what they were: a once-a-year gift from someone special.

Pleated skirts and sweater sets were our primary outfit. Jeans were seldom seen, even on the boys, except at 4-H

livestock shows. We wore those skirts so long the hems were about four inches over the top of our bobby socks and saddle shoes.

It was not until our thirty-fifth class reunion that my fellow band members, grinning sheepishly, surprised me with their confession: They had kept those band instruments so shiny on the chance they might be able to see more than that standard four inches of feminine leg reflected in chrome.

Yes, our hearts were young and gay, and we were more than a little naive. But it was a wonderful time, one I wish my children might have had, too.

MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

Katherine (Nola Thornton) Cravens

The decade of the 1930s was not the most ideal time to be pursuing ambitious dreams. Without interruption, the Great Depression not only kept a firm grip over our land like a disease, but spread its unpleasant influence far and wide. Money, in many cases, was almost nonexistent. Still, those dismal years may have been the best of times to take stock of our lives and prepare ourselves for the future, which was, at best, almost totally obscured in economic darkness. With little profitable work and plenty of time on our hands, staying in school was, without a doubt, one of the best decisions a member of our generation could have made.

Our family of eight people lived on the paved highway two miles north of Gillespie in Macoupin County, Illinois. The younger children attended William's School located only two blocks from our house. Most of the students in that small community, who lived within walking distance, went home for lunch. Since lunch boxes and sandwiches were unnecessary, the nearness of the school was a blessing in those bleak days. At noon hour, the Thornton children returned home to hot vegetables. The menu seldom varied.

Although a bright yellow school bus transported students from the southern most parts of the school district in Wilsonville, Eagerville, and Mt. Clair, there were no accommodations in other areas of the community. During my freshman and sophomore years, I walked the two miles into town, then another mile across town to the high school. In those days, the girls did not wear blue jeans or slacks to school. Neither did we wear long cotton stockings. We wore anklets the year around. Sometimes, when Dad was not working, he would drive me to school providing there was enough gasoline in the car.

In all kinds of weather, I left home at 7:30 a.m. so I would not be late for school. My warm navy blue coat extended below my knees. My rubber galoshes reached above my ankles. Between the two articles of wearing apparel only a small portion of my bare legs was exposed to the bitter cold. Each afternoon as I walked homeward, I watched the days grow longer. The pleasant spring weather lifted our morale. In a cheerful mood, we would count the days until summer vacation.

Luckily, each year I found a part-time job to help me financially. The summer I was sixteen, I cared for an elderly ailing woman. The following spring, my sister Treva and I earned considerable compensation working with a crew in the strawberry fields. Near the end of the season, when the fruit had passed its peak of commercial value, we were given permission to pick the berries for our personal use. Our family enjoyed the free treat.

When I was a junior, my sister was a freshman. That year, rain or shine, on school days a brand-new school bus began a regular stop in front of our house. At two-year intervals, a brother or sister graduated from GCHS until all six of the Thornton offspring had passed through its portals.

In May, 1940, I paid $2.98 for a pink moiré taffeta formal at the Rifkin Shop in Gillespie. The Junior-Senior Banquet and Prom was only two weeks away. My white sandals had one-inch heels. Rayon hose were held up with elastic garters. My small white purse held a lipstick, a handkerchief, and a comb. The beautifully decorated tables, the twinkling candles, and the delicious food added to the festivities of the evening. Everyone present, including the teachers, was dressed like royalty. Prom dates were few and since the available boys seemed too bashful to ask a young lady for a dance, we girls moved to the rhythm of the lively dances Miss Kulsinski had taught us in P.E. class. For one evening, I was "Cinderella at the ball."

The dozen or more women teachers at GCHS had been well-chosen. They were respected for their teaching abilities and for their years of service. They were all unmarried, as was the norm in those days.

My favorite of all the teachers, male or female, was Miss Betty Burrough, the junior and senior English and literature instructor. Miss Burrough was a plump lady with bird-like legs. A permanent concentration line was etched between her brows. She was not only an excellent teacher, but was also well ahead of the conventional teaching standards of the day. Often the literature being studied portrayed arousing tales of love and devotion. In a professional manner, Miss B talked freely about love and the attraction of one sex to another. Little by little over the months, we learned Miss B had given up the man she loved to be a school teacher. Her advice was, "If you love someone, tell him."

One day for some forgotten reason, old-fashioned petticoats were the subject of conversation. In her time, Miss B recalled, girls wore as many as seven such garments, even on the hottest days. The more petticoats a girl wore, the more fashionable she was, and only the more wealthy girls could afford so many. With that certain smile her students had come to recognize, Miss B added, "Very few girls got into trouble in those days. No man could get near enough."

Jack Johnson, an eighteen-year-old senior student, was naive enough to raise his hand. "Miss Burrough? I don't understand. How could they get into trouble?" When the sound of laughter went up among the students, Jack looked innocently around the room. Over her rimless glasses, Miss B calmly considered the question. The right answer required professional skill. After what seemed like a very long time, she said, "Let me put it this way, Jack. You *will* know when you are too close to a girl. Keep a respectable distance and you won't have to worry about a thing."

Miss Evelyn Firth, commercial arts instructor, often gave her students advice on office etiquette, poise, and confidence. Her old-maidish attitude toward any man, especially the office supervisor, often sent her all-girl class into bouts of restrained laughter. Miss Firth once told us about one such "boss" who had the audacity to invite her to lunch. She had solved the undesirable situation by promptly quitting her newly acquired position.

During my junior and senior years, I was employed as a library assistant. Those of us who helped in the library were paid six dollars per month. The project was known as the National Youth Administration (NYA), one of the programs initiated by President Roosevelt to help the distressed economy.

Attending Gillespie High School had been a privilege. Music, chorus, drama, sports, and daily doses of pleasant humor provided spice to our otherwise monotonous routine. Within one year after graduation, young men were leaving GCHS for the military service. Some of them would not return. As World War II escalated, the Depression, the effects of which had hindered our goals, gradually reduced its level of intensity.

On September 21, 1991, thirty-six members of our class of 1941, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our graduation at the Holidome Motel near Carlinville, Illinois. At that time, Miss

Marcia McKee, the only remaining teacher of those years, was living in a care center.

This year, 1993, a new modern edifice is being erected to replace the old high school in Gillespie, a building where new generations will live and relive the unforgettable events of their high school experience.

HOME ECONOMICS AND THE SLOGAN

Lois I. Armstrong

Let me first take you back to January, 1936, when our close-knit group of eighth graders had the unique distinction of being the last class to leave Grant Grade School in the cold of winter. I had spent seven and one-half years being taught the three Rs in the best elementary school in Streator, Illinois, after moving there from central Iowa with my parents and two sisters. I was the middle and smallest child, but I was the best at playing ball and was the tomboy of the family. Daddy said I should have been a boy. I could outrun most of the fellows my age.

The suggestion was made, with all agreeing, that we should have a class song to sing for our parents at the commencement program on Friday afternoon. I thought we should use the tune "It's June in January" because we were graduating. My chum Maxine Nelson volunteered to help me with the task of choosing just the right words. I'm sure there are no copies of that ditty floating around today, but I did hang on to my hard-earned diploma. Incidentally, I was the only girl who made her graduation dress. I chose maroon-checked material for the shirt-waist pattern, with long sleeves and a rounded collar. The soft maroon-satin bow pinned at the neckline was just the right touch to complement my blonde hair.

So then, only eight days later, one shy little country girl reported as a freshman at Streator Township High School. Since we lived several miles beyond the north edge of town, and there were no school buses back then, we had to depend on the family car. Until we learned to drive, our parents made a lot of trips to get us a good education. My older sister Ruth, a seasoned sophomore, gave me comfort and support until I became oriented to the large school.

My family was well-known in the community. Ella, our mother, was a self-taught cook and caterer. We often helped her serve delicious meals at dinner parties and social functions around town. Of course, we entertained a lot at home also. I should tell you that my big experience has something to do with food.

It seemed natural that I would follow the four-year home economics course of study. Our school had a very fine home economics department and great teachers. By April 1937, a section of classrooms and a beautiful auditorium were completed. The first outside event scheduled was a cooking school. It was sponsored by the *Streator Daily Times-Press* in conjunction with the Modern Equipment Company, the local Kelvinator dealer. It was advertised that a new refrigerator would be presented to the person whom the three judges determined had written the best slogan (in 25 words or less) describing the appliance. All home economics students were privileged to attend the three afternoon sessions. We sat in the balcony, and each day there was a sea of women below us.

The economist in charge of the very successful school, Miss Mary Eggers, was gracious. We soon made a hit with everyone. Tickets were drawn each day to give away the tasty dishes which she had prepared before our arrival.

It was Friday, the final session, and I should have already been in my seat, but I still had to drop my entry for the contest into the box at the front door. As I almost ran to reach the inside entrance to the auditorium, I passed by my Spanish

classroom. My teacher Mrs. Daley was alone; so I went in to ask her if she had a minute to hear my fourteen-word slogan. She thought I had a splendid chance to win. I found it hard to concentrate on the program, and the time seemed to drag. I was hungry and tired, but I had to stay until the end.

Finally, Mr. Denehe, advertising manager of the *Times-Press*, stepped to the microphone with the envelope containing the judges' choice held in his raised hand. He made a few remarks, then opened the envelope. As the first word reached my ears, I was sure it was mine. I let out a gasp! He went on reading: Deluxe in design; Dependable in quality; Delightful to use; And plus-powered to make it exclusive."

Ruth, who was sitting two rows behind me, saw my reaction and asked what was wrong. I tried to tell her through my happy tears that I had won! They were calling from the state for Lois Scroggins to come on down. My teacher Miss Riegel helped me manage the stairs. For a stunned fifteen-year-old girl, it was almost more than she could handle. All I could hear over the applause was, "Oh, the poor dear, she's crying!" Mother and sister Alice were in shock as they watched me arrive on the stage.

I received many phone calls when I got home. The whole town had read it in the paper. The anticipation and excitement didn't wear off until the Kelvinator was delivered four days later to our home out in Marilla Park.

At the first opportunity, I invited my teacher and the girls in the class to my home for a special viewing. I tried some of the fancy recipes found in the cookbook which came with my beautiful refrigerator. I think I may still have the book after 55 years.

When I graduated in June of '40, we moved my great prize with us to Minnesota. We lived there only one year, however, moving right back to Streator. This time my folks bought a house in town. Soon both sisters were married. I was the last one to leave the nest.

Years later, we sold that well-used appliance to my first husband's cousin who lived in Peoria. It served us very well, and I shall never forget that exciting experience at good old Streator High.

THE GATHERING OF THE NUTS

Lydia Jo Boston

The gymnasium separated the high school from the grade school in Nauvoo. In spite of this proximity and the fact that I had friends and cousins in high school, it remained for me an exciting mystery. Carrying your books and notebooks and walking from class to class sounded much more intriguing than just sitting at a desk and waiting for the teacher to begin class—whatever it might be. Going from room to room with a different teacher in each one was an adventure! Being able to visit with friends on the way to class was a freedom to be taken advantage of. It was so much better than having to wait until recess as in grade school.

The initiation enlightened me as to how freshmen were regarded in these hallowed halls of intellectual endeavor. We were invited to a wiener roast at Tyson Creek. After the picnic, we were to take part in a play. As your name was called, you joined the group; we were to play the parts of living room furniture—sofa, chair, table, and lamp. After all were assembled, we were told the name of this theatrical production: *The Gathering of the Nuts*!

Some of the classes were much harder than expected and to this day algebra remains for me an "unsolved mystery." Homework took on new meaning. It no longer meant carrying in wood, coal, or kindling or running errands at home. Rather, it had to do with studies, those important lessons for the next day.

I did feel privileged to be able to attend high school. By this time most kids did, but in preceding generations it was not always so. Dad had been encouraged to quit high school after his junior year to learn the carpentry trade with his uncle. Mother, being the oldest girl in her family, was expected to work, and apparently high school was never a consideration. No one in Mother's immediate family had ever graduated from high school, so I was destined to be a first. It was assumed I'd have to study extra hard for having skipped grade four in grade school.

When I was a sophomore, I made the big decision to study Latin I. Regarded by most students as a strict disciplinarian, Leona Burmeister was a patient teacher trying hard to make her love of Latin rub off on us. She allowed us to study in couples or in groups if we wished, so we would find an empty classroom or go to the balcony over the gym to rehearse Latin phrases. Occasionally, she rewarded our work with a party. In Latin class, I finally realized how important it was to know those boring parts of speech we had to learn in English. It was an interesting discovery to learn that many English words had their source in Latin.

The school hired a new principal the year I was a junior. He made it a point to visit as many of the students as he could before school started. I remember telling him (he was also the math teacher) that I couldn't see any reason for having had to study geometry. He asked for a piece of paper and then cut a square, folding it into a triangle, then he said I needed to know the relationship of triangles to squares in order to cut quilt blocks.

The evening we were to register for classes in our junior year, I was greeted by my cousin Marjorie who was also in my class. She had learned we were to have a new boy in our class. We excitedly watched for a glimpse of the new student. We were astonished and disappointed when we saw this young-looking fellow. Surely, we decided, he must be a freshman, and we wouldn't be having a new classmate after all. But he was a junior. He played the part of my son in our junior play, and I had the privilege of dragging him across the stage by his ear. (Was this an early indication of a lifetime arrangement?) I married Raymond Boston in 1946.

We still laugh about the time returning from the junior-senior bus trip to Chicago when the single seating booths in the eating place where we stopped weren't sufficient for our crowd. Another cousin, Margaret, a senior, didn't have a place to sit. Raymond was sitting alone and she was left standing. Since she preferred not to sit with him, I gave her my seat and I sat across from him. When the waitress took my order, she asked if I wanted onions on my hamburger; but before I could get a word out, Raymond quickly answered, "No." Then he asked me to sit by him on the bus for the rest of the way home.

I joined the chorus and tried hard to learn to sing. I took part in some of the plays and all four years participated in the declamatory contests. I joined the Girl Reserves which was a high school organization associated with the YWCA. On a few occasions I went to Quincy to the "Y" for special meetings with the GRs. I was thrilled when my mother was asked to serve on the GR board, and, when I was an officer, I went to the monthly board meetings with her. The Girl Reserves Mother-Daughter Banquet was the big event of the year.

There were parties and fun times to remember. Once we had a bobsled party, with the sleds being pulled by tractors. The one I was in had an inebriated driver who landed us in the ditch. By the time we were rescued and back to town, the rest of the, students had enjoyed the soup supper, and we got the leftovers!

After an indoor party where the sponsoring class had us playing hide and seek, Marjorie had a surprise when she opened her locker to get her coat to go home. She found a student fast asleep. No one had found his hiding place. He had missed the rest of the party—refreshments and all; our laughter awakened him!

One day, the quiet of the study hall suddenly erupted in laughter as a girl who had taken all she could endure of the teasing and tormenting from the boy sitting behind her, rose to her feet, turned around, and banged her literature book repeatedly on the head of the offender!

I recall coming home for lunch laughing about a student who had sat on a tack that someone had placed on her seat. I thought it was hilarious that this somewhat arrogant girl "had got what was coming to her." Dad was quick to say that just because everyone else in school had laughed, it did not give me a license to do so. All my life that incident has reminded me that I am responsible for what I do, regardless of what everyone else does.

When Thanksgiving was being jostled between the third and fourth Thursdays of November, the kids circulated a petition in favor of their favorite day, which wasn't the one designated by the school for the holiday. When some of the signers walked out of school, it called for diplomacy on the part of the administration, and all was settled peacefully.

Some thought the fun thing was carried too far when it was decided to name the first issue of the school annual *Ye Olde Jug* in commemoration of Nauvoo's reputation of wine making. The Principal said that if someone who had voted for that name wanted to reconsider and would come forward, he would call for another vote to determine the name. Many were glad to see it changed to *The Purple Banner*.

High school had fast become a way of life and all too soon we would be engaged in senior activities and planning our futures. Our 1941 class was the first to have a Class Night for the reading of the class prophecy and will and other reminiscing. As salutatorian for the class, I gave the welcome at graduation.

The camera I received from Aunt Mary for a graduation gift was put to use taking lots of pictures—family pictures and snapshots of me in my cap and gown. Mother was so excited about the whole event that she tried on the cap and gown. One of my treasured pictures is of her in it. She passed away two years later and didn't see the rest of her children graduate.

I always wished graduation had been ten days earlier so I could say I graduated from high school at sixteen, but, alas, I was seventeen. College was out of the question, although that is what I really wanted. My second option of training to be a nurse was also an impossibility. By fall, cutting grapes and clerking in the dime store was all the work I could find. As a result, I went back to high school. I picked up the business classes not worked into my schedule during high school. By then, home economics had been added to the curriculum for the first time, so I enrolled in that class. The things I learned in it have served me well through the years of raising a family. I have probably used those skills more than many of the others, and I still enjoy sewing and cooking.

I started high school as a "nut" and enjoyed lots of "nutty" times, but there was much more to my high school experience. Those wonderful days represent some of the most cherished memories I have.

HIGH SCHOOL IN DIXON

Lillian Schick Peterson

The city of Dixon is divided by the Rock River. Those students who lived on the north side of the river attended North Central School, while those of us who resided south of the river attended South Central School. The main office was at South Central, as well as eight grades of elementary students. All four floors on the west end of the building were classrooms for the high school. There was a large assembly room on the second floor, and the gym was on the fourth floor.

When my older brother and sister came in from the country to go to high school from 1922 to 1926, they rode in a horse-sized buggy pulled by our pony. One teacher remarked that she wondered who that boy was who drove to school with that little horse.

School started at 9:00 and was dismissed at 3:30. An hour and fifteen minutes were scheduled at noon, allowing time for pupils living in town to walk home for lunch. We rural pupils brought our lunch, which was often sandwiches, an apple, and cookies. Lunch was wrapped in several sheets of the *Tribune* and tied with a string. In good weather, we grouped ourselves with friends and ate our lunches in our cars. I was lucky that Dad bought a used Ford coupe when I started to high school in the fall of 1926. Elsie Toot, a friend from our rural school, often ate with me in our car. One day as we were eating, some boys came walking past. Elsie wanted to attract their attention, so she slammed her door as hard as she could. Immediately the glass in the door broke and scattered over the pavement! The boys just took one look and walked right on. We were both worried about who would have to pay for the broken window.

After eating, we often walked the three blocks to town where we could browse around the Woolworth and Newberry stores. When cold weather arrived, we went to the top floor of the school where long tables and benches were set up in the hall for us to eat. The girls gathered at the west end and the boys on the east.

After eating, the boys slipped into their gym shoes and ran into the gym to play basketball, while the girls sat ourselves on the bleachers to watch the boys play. A teacher was usually assigned to take noon duty and supervise us. One noon, Miss White, the math teacher, was on duty. She watched the boys for awhile and then asked, "When do you girls play?" We answered, "We never play. We just watch the boys."

She decided that some changes should be made and that the girls would have their turns, too. She told us to have our gym shoes available so that we would be ready when our turn came. In a day or so, we girls took over the gym floor with our style of basketball. It must have been a sorry sight to watch. Few knew how to dribble the ball. We threw the ball toward the basket, but it seldom went in. Rules of the game were poorly followed. But we did have fun running around.

After we had several turns at playing basketball at noon, the afternoon classroom teachers began to complain. Since no showers followed the play, the girls were bringing a most unpleasant aroma to their classrooms. Even Miss White decided that we would have to give up on our "female rights."

At that time, the school day was divided into seven forty-five minute periods. Four were planned for class instruction, and the other three were study hall periods. These took place in the large assembly hall with one teacher in charge. Discipline was no problem, so the teacher could spend the time correcting papers or doing some reading. I used to really put my time to good use in the study hall because I didn't want to take home any schoolwork. Occasionally, the math teacher would give us some challenging study problem which I enjoyed solving in the evening. The following morning, I was sometimes met at the school door by a classmate wanting to know if I had the solution to the problems, and asking if I would share it. I did have it and, yes, I did share it. It was a great satisfaction to me to have a friend say, "I can understand it better when you explain it to me than when the teacher does."

In 1930, we needed sixteen credits to graduate. We were required to have three in English, two in math, two in history, one in science, and one in government. Home Ec was offered for three years. Mother had her daughters take advantage of that program. In my junior year, the sewing teacher challenged us to cut out a dress and finish it in one class period, which was one hour and a half. I planned a very simple dress with no waistline and no set-in sleeves. I finished it but was required to wear it to school the next day . . . a little embarrassing.

Extracurricular activities took place after 3:30. I took art from Miss Guernsey, who came out from the Art Institute in Chicago every other week. She gave me a lot of guidance and put me in charge of the artwork in the *Dixonian*, the yearbook of 1930. Miss Lawson had the Girls' Glee Club, which met every week. Once we were invited to sing for the PTA. Being very short, I was placed near the end of the front row. I was embarrassed when during one number, a sheet of my music fell to the stage floor. I paused for a moment, then quickly scooped it up. I was most grateful that Miss Lawson completely ignored my goof. The Home Economic girls had a club that met monthly. During my senior year, I was president of that group.

Each class had a dance once a year. There was very little dating in the freshman and sophomore classes. The party would have been very dull if it weren't for Mr. Bowers, the coach, who came up to the gym and did some calling. He got all the boys and girls out on the floor. Then he gave us instructions on formations that we should take as we marched around to the music. Suddenly, he would shout out "dance" and everyone was to dance with the person with whom they were lined up. Since the boys were bashful about asking the girls to dance, Mr. Bowers would call out "girls' choice." It worked every time.

The junior and senior classes gave a play every year. They were allowed to give a portion of the play at both high schools to advertise their production. In January 1928, the senior class from North Central came to our assembly to advertise their play, *Captain Applejack*. Pirates stormed upon the stage and gave a very exciting performance. Later, I found out that one of the pirates was Ronald Reagan. Most of us knew him as Dutch Reagan, the popular lifeguard out at Lowell Park.

During 1929 and 1930, a new high school was built on the north bank of the Rock River. Enough of the construction was completed in January 1930, so that both of the schools moved in and started the second semester together. So, in June 1930, we were the first class to graduate from the new school. Our graduation exercises were held in the huge circular pavilion in Assembly Park, the main building on the historic Chataugua grounds.

The North Central School is now the site of Heritage Square, a lovely retirement center. South Central School is now in the process of becoming a historic museum. It was purchased by the Ronald Reagan Home Preservation Foundation. The classroom where Ronald Reagan attended fifth grade will be restored and school children will be invited to visit, hopefully to be thrilled and influenced by the character and attainments of the beloved American president.

HIGH SCHOOL THE HARD WAY

Marie Freesmeyer

In the early twenties, very few boys or girls who lived in the Hamburg Precinct of Calhoun County attended high school. The only such school in the county was a three-year one at Hardin, the county seat. For me to graduate from a four-year high school was very unusual and not an easy task.

Because of the short term in all rural schools, the 1918 influenza epidemic, and having had three different teachers, my year in the seventh grade had been lacking in both quantity and quality. Hence, my parents, realizing my interest in learning, permitted me to board in Hardin to complete my elementary education. That year, I spent long hours studying diligently in order to successfully compete with the smartest students in a large class. The year provided me with many valuable learning experiences and was excellent preparation for the four years ahead.

Enrolling as a freshman in the same school was only a matter of moving upstairs with the upper classmen. There, in

what seemed like a giant leap into the academic world, our class was almost doubled by the addition of students from surrounding rural schools. Like me, many of these students boarded in town but returned home on weekends. Three of these farm girls and I boarded in the same home and became close and congenial friends.

The principal knew that I needed to be challenged so he suggested that I take Latin I with the sophomores. Even with four additional classes, I did not have to work as hard as I had the previous year. I found time for fun and friendships. Being a healthy teenager with few worries, I found the carefree life of a freshman student a wonderful experience.

One thing that made life less frustrating for teenagers at that time was our nonchalant attitude toward the clothes we wore. Mothers insisted that we should always be clean and neat; however, little or no emphasis was placed on style. I can scarcely recall the typical wardrobe of teenage girls at that time, but I'm sure it was meager and serviceable. There were many kinds of skirts, and middies of different colors besides the usual white and navy ones. The colorful dresses of gingham or worsted were usually made at home or by a seamstress. We wore comfortable, well-polished oxfords with either black or white stockings. It was essential that we have a sweater, a raincoat, and plenty of warm wraps for our treks to and from school. Those students whose parents were more affluent, dressed no differently from those of poorer families; no one was judged by the clothes that he or she wore.

For my sophomore year, I transferred to Jersey Township High School in Jerseyville, where I could complete my four years. One reason was that a brother lived just three miles west of town, so I planned to stay there or, at least, be with him and his family on weekends. For the first few months, I stayed with my brother and rode to and from school with a neighbor girl who drove a horse and buggy; yes, I lived in the so-called "horse-and-buggy days."

It seemed strange, indeed, to be in such a large building with so many classrooms. The number of students completely overwhelmed this country girl. I felt lost in that sea of humanity. With some difficulty, I managed to find all my classrooms the first day, but was totally unprepared for all the questioning stares which I received when my name was called. It gave me considerable concern until some kind soul explained to me that a mentally handicapped girl in town had the same name as mine.

It didn't take long for me to win favorable recognition in class and with my teachers, but it was more difficult for me to win friends—probably because I was more interested in studying and competing than I was in forming friendships. Also, friendship groups among sophomores, from both town and surrounding communities, had been formed during the freshman year. Since I was from another county, perhaps there was some resentment; even the teachers kidded me occasionally about being from Calhoun, where the hillsides were so steep that the cows were said to develop longer legs on one side in order to graze.

During my junior year, I boarded in town, as I had done most of the preceding year—but continued to spend most of my weekends with my brother. Because only two years were left for me to take the many interesting subjects offered, I signed up for so many courses that I scarcely had a free period for study. Frequently, I used the noon hour for preparing lessons instead of going home for lunch. For me, the P.E. period seemed a waste of precious time. One of the highlights of the year was the privilege of having a role in the plays. It didn't matter to me that I was given the part of an elderly character each time.

A two-day weekend was not long enough for someone to make the thirty-mile trip in order that I might spend a few hours with my family, so I seldom got there. In March, when school was dismissed for a couple of days for a teachers' meeting, I was determined to get home. The roads in the Illinois bottom

were too muddy for any car to get through, but my girlfriend and I found a way. We hitchhiked to Carrollton. (That was my usual way of getting to my brother's home on Friday evening and back to school on Monday morning). There we caught the local train which used a spur into East Hardin a few times each week. There was no passenger car, so we rode with the engineer. He even allowed us to blow the whistle for the crossings. A half-mile east of the river was a triangular track which enabled the short train to turn around and back into the station. We thanked our kind friend and took the ferry across the Illinois River where we were met by my younger brother in his Model-T. It had taken a bit of doing to get home, but it was worth the effort. I hadn't been there since the Christmas vacation.

Now that my last year of high school had arrived, I wanted to enroll in as many classes as I possibly could. In fact, I attempted so many that I soon had to drop typing for lack of time. Math was my favorite subject, but I had already taken every math course, except trigonometry. I signed up for the course, though I would be the only girl in the class. Those boys proved to be stiff competition, but, again, hard work allowed success. Thankful that I boarded near the school that year, I rushed home for my noon meal and hurried back to study for my afternoon classes.

Having been chosen Literary Editor for the school's annual, I found it to be a time-consuming but enjoyable task. Having an important role in the class plays was for me a challenge and pure delight. However, being a member of the debating team was the real highlight of the year. The teacher of our public speaking class entered us in the state contest which was to debate the proposition supplied by the Illinois Debating League: "Resolved, That the United States and Canada should immediately set about constructing the St. Lawrence Deep Water Way." Two boys and I were given the positive side. After a practice debate in our own school, each team met an opposing team of other high school students from other places in a series of district contests. Both our positive and negative teams continued to win, finally meeting the other district winners in the state contest at Normal. We returned with two trophies.

At some point during my four years in high school, I had decided that instead of going on to college, I would begin my teaching career. In March of my senior year, I signed a contract with the directors of a large rural school in Calhoun County. After mastering Bagley's text *Classroom Management*, taught by the principal, I wrote the State Teachers' Examination to secure my certificate.

The decision to teach instead of going on to college was, perhaps, not a wise one, as it meant several summers in college, then continuing to acquire college credits by correspondence and extension courses for many years. As one of my brothers once remarked to me, "You have a knack for doing things the hard way." Maybe so, but I did work with diligence to make school as exciting and meaningful for my students as it was for me.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Ivan E. Prall

If you have ever been suspected of something you did not do, you'll sympathize with my predicament in my senior year of high school. Actually, the basis for my trouble started in my junior year. A journalism class was being offered for the first time, and having read of Floyd Gibbons and other renowned foreign correspondents, I decided that journalism was to be my future.

A weekly newspaper dubbed the *Barblet* was started, and I found myself appointed editor. All went well through the

year until March. At that time, due to a tight school budget and some critical news stories in our *Barblet*, Mr. Beals, Superintendent of DeKalb High School, stopped all funding. Bertha Rutledge, our journalism teacher, suggested that our class go forth and sell subscriptions to finance our school paper. This we did, and it was successful.

Starting the fall session of my senior year, our *Barblet* was doing well, but Mr. Beals had installed a number of restrictions, which, in an editorial, we compared to rules like those in Hitler's Germany. This was the fall of 1939. Abruptly, the boom was lowered; and, although the students had paid their subscriptions, the *Barblet* was banned. Students congregated in front of the school office, and when Mr. Beals emerged with a megaphone shouting, "Clear the halls!" they bombarded him with wadded up copies of the newspaper.

Obviously, this left a sour feeling in the journalism class. Actually, I was probably the least upset. For several years, I had been delivering the *DeKalb Chronicle* after school and was well-acquainted with its editor. Consequently, I approached him with the idea of carrying a high school news column once a week, since there would be no other coverage of school news. He was agreeable, and I not only wrote it—but I was paid for the job as well.

Things went smoothly the remainder of the year, and, with my added income, I acquired a car and became interested in a girl across the lab bench in my chemistry class. *Gone with the Wind* was coming to a local theater. I asked Marjorie if she would accompany me to see it. It was my first date.

After the movie, we drifted to the Prince Castle for sundaes. A school friend entered and congratulated me on the paper I had put out that night. "What paper?" I asked. "You know," he laughed and walked away.

The Varsity Club dance was in progress that night, and someone had climbed the roof of the school and, opening the skylights, dropped copies of a paper similar to the old *Barblet* down on the dance floor. The same person had then proceeded to distribute copies on street corners in DeKalb and in neighboring towns. By morning, these were selling at more than a dollar per copy.

This look-alike publication was labeled *The Liberator* and was filled with off-color stories aimed at the school administration and various teachers who had offended the students producing it.

All day Sunday I tried to learn the identities of *The Liberator* publishers, but with no success.

Arriving at school Monday morning with considerable trepidation, I was met with acclaim by most of the student body. Literally no one believed I knew nothing of this publication. The trepidation was well-justified, as news soon reached me that the maligned teachers planned to bring libel suits against me or my parents.

Around 9:00 a.m., as I sat in study hall trying to force myself to concentrate on a lesson, a secretary arrived from the office requesting that I report there immediately. As I approached, though some distance away, I could hear a teacher shouting at Mr. Beals, demanding my name be removed from the National Honor Society. *The Liberator* had carried a news item that her clothes were purchased at the Aurora Tent and Awning Company.

Arriving at the office, I was ushered into an inner room. Seated around the table were the Chief of Police, a county deputy, and another officer. The thought crossed my mind that someone was making a major issue out of what seemed more like an example of student spring horseplay.

Surprisingly, my answers to their questions seemed to satisfy them, and there was no threatening with rubber hoses or strong lights. One question did puzzle me, however. They asked if I had seen or heard anyone mention a cornet. I was allowed to return to my study hall and, throughout the day,

other students and teachers continued to tie the publication of *The Liberator* to me.

That evening my assistant editor from the *Barblet* and a friend of his were arrested for stealing an expensive cornet. My assistant was a junior in high school, as was his crony. Proceeds from selling the cornet was used to purchase mimeograph paper and to rent a machine to run off *The Liberator*. They had induced several girls from the old *Barblet* staff to type and lay out the publication.

The father of the assistant editor was president of a local bank. Consequently, both boys were soon out on bail and received rather light sentences.

Unfortunately for me, many of the teachers and students still eyed me as the mastermind behind the publication. Three years ago, my graduating class held its fiftieth anniversary reunion. Several members broached the matter. No matter what I answered, they smiled and winked. I shall, it seems, never be vindicated.

INNOCENCE LOST AT TAYLORVILLE HIGH

Martha Jean Wieland

In the city of Taylorville, Illinois, my old Taylorville Township High School is no more. The building itself has given way to a building housing apartments. A section of the two rail black iron fence now graces a lawn in the heart of the city. The term "Township" does not appear in the name of a new structure built on a campus a mile or two away. We of the class of 1934 remember fondly our solid red brick edifice with its wide, worn wooden staircases, huge windows, wooden floors and wainscoting, the pervasive combined odor of floor-sweeping compound and sweaty gym shoes, drab metal lockers occupying every possible space, and the tower that was in the original section of the building.

My father graduated from TTHS just before the turn of the century. He was prone to regale us with tales of boyish pranks, including the story of one Halloween when a group of boys (nameless, of course!) managed to coax a cow to the top of that tower. History does not record how she was gotten down from her precarious perch.

Despite all the changes, "high school" still conjures a picture of the educational facility I knew in my youth. In memory, I wander those spacious halls, calling off the rooms as I pass the doors: Miss Ashbrook's room, Mrs. DeHart's senior English room, Mr. Cole's Biology room, Mr. Oliver's history room, the library where Mrs. Hill reigned supreme, Mr. Thornton's math room, Miss Orr's home economics room, the gym where Miss Baker and Coach McAdams blew whistles and Mr. Asbury held band practice, Mr. Card's manual training shop, and Mr. Clausen's ag room. We made every possible effort not to be invited for an official visit to Principal Walters' office.

At the top of the north stairway to the second floor was the big study hall with two sections of desks. On one of these, someone, in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm, had engraved the hallowed date of Lindbergh's historic flight. I remember teachers pacing through study hall aisles to keep order and provide assistance. For some reason, I remember sophomore Paul Schneider swaggering past, wearing "plus fours," and freshman George Wilcockson, a white area of zinc oxide ointment masking an enormous fever blister on his chin.

As I think back to that time, I am struck by a sense of our innocence and provincialism, especially mine. I *was* a farm girl, two years younger than my classmates, which may have made a difference. We were far from sophisticated. We had little or no experience outside our own small worlds—a condition abruptly and harshly changed when many of the boys and some of the girls became world travelers for Uncle Sam during World

War II. Scarcely anyone had his own transportation. I use the word "his" advisedly. It would have been unthinkable for a *girl* to own a car. A Saturday night movie at the Capitol Theatre on the square was the height of excitement. The Junior-Senior Prom was just that: no freshmen, sophomores, or nonstudents allowed. The affair was held in the gym. One went whether he or she had a date or not, and many did not. One went when the dance started, stayed until the band stopped playing, and then went home.

Teenage hormones raged as fiercely as always, of course, but not overtly. There was a great deal of whispering and giggling going on all of the time, but everything sexual seemed veiled in secrecy. I remember a pretty little girl in one of my freshman classes who one day simply stopped coming to school. It was a long, long time before I found that she had died following an abortion. At the time, I probably didn't know what one was.

It was tremendously exciting for me to enter high school. I came from a little country school in which there was one room for all eight grades, one teacher, more pupils than desks, outdoor "necessaries," a pump for drinking water, and boys' and girls' cloakrooms in which to deposit outer wraps and lunch pails. Instead of walking to high school, I rode with my older sister when she drove to work from our farm home. No yellow school buses then! I could scarcely believe the freedom of moving from room to room for my classes, having a locker where I stored my belongings, and having the opportunity to interact with so many other students. I relished the entire experience, with one notable exception—Freshman English.

The first six weeks of school were truly distressing for me. In English, we had a dark green paperback workbook known familiarly as the *M.O.S. Book*. That stood for *Maintenance of Skill*. The skill referred to was the use of proper grammar. I had a very real problem in that I had no skill to maintain. Nearly every student in that class came from the city school and had been rather well-grounded in grammar basics, but I was woefully lacking, scarcely able to recognize even a noun or a verb. In fact, grammar as a subject had barely been touched upon while I attended elementary school. I think it *may* have been mentioned in passing once or twice in eighth grade; I was so shy that I never once thought of asking the instructor for help in my dilemma, and she failed to recognize my desperate need.

Every one of the days we were plowing through the hated book, I died a thousand deaths, becoming physically ill when I had to enter the room. Even now, I am not sure how I managed to pass the first six weeks. The entire time spent in "maintaining our skills" was so traumatic for me that I have always disliked the shade of green used for the book cover. If the old *M.O.S. Book* had comprised the entire curriculum in Freshman English, I'm sure I'd still be back there in Taylorville Township High School, dejectedly trying to pass the course.

Fortunately for me, the lesson plan contained other elements for which I was better prepared. We soon left behind the pedantic *M.O.S.* period, getting down to facets of English that I enjoyed. We read some classics, wrote some of our own, and I did some extra fun work. Thus, I managed to skim through. A few years later, I successfully maneuvered to pass college English courses without any real knowledge of grammar or sentence construction. Even now I depend upon instinct that something sounds or looks right! *M.O.S.* didn't help me at all.

In this freshman English class, I first became aware that one cannot be totally trusting in the real world. To demonstrate how much (or how little) we were able to make use of those mythical skills we were "maintaining," we were required to do a considerable amount of writing. I'd written an essay in response to an early assignment and it was ready to turn in on time. The day before the essays were due, Marjorie D. (who sat behind me in study hall) asked to see my effort. I was perfectly

willing to pass my paper to her, not even thinking it strange when she was a bit tardy in handing it back.

A few days later, the essays were returned to us by our teacher, Miss Aileen Ashbrook, who demanded to see Marjorie and me after class. I was totally unaware of what was going to transpire and was thunderstruck when I was accused of plagiarism. At that time in my life, I did not even know there was such a thing as plagiarism, much less that there was a word to describe it. I couldn't have found the word in the dictionary because I had no idea how to spell it.

Marjorie's essay and mine were identical. To this day, I can't imagine why she did not make at least a few changes in order that the copying not be so obvious. My astonishment and consternation were genuine. They must also have been convincing because I was finally the one who got the grade—a good one, as I recall.

This was a bitter lesson, one I have never forgotten. Yet I cannot bring myself to distrust the entire world. I am acquainted with people who assign ulterior motives to everyone in everything said or done. I feel sorry for those wary, tiresome individuals in their barren and ugly worlds. If one cannot feel at ease among one's fellow men, there is not much joy in life. So I shall continue to pass my essay to the person who asks to see it. But I think that perhaps I shall set a limit to the time he or she may possess it.

HIGH SCHOOL HERE I COME

Anthony L. Siemer

My decision to attend high school was based on likes and dislikes. I liked school and books, and I disliked the thought of farming all my life. Because our farm was not very large and I had three older brothers, I could not foresee a future for me on the farm. So the alternative was to get at least a high school education.

I talked to Vernon Knese, who had graduated from Brussels Community High School in 1940, the same year I graduated from St. Joseph's Grade School in Meppen. He had been the valedictorian of his class, so naturally he thought high school was not too difficult. He also said that the boys wore dress pants, shirts, and ties. The thought of wearing a tie to school didn't thrill me.

We must have sent an order to Sears and Roebuck for new school clothes because, when the first day of high school arrived, I was neatly dressed in what I had previously considered "Sunday clothes." Part of my outfit was a colorful tie. My sister Cathy drove me to school in our 1935 Ford.

Our St. Louis consign, Lorraine McClimens, had married Willard Kamp, a local young man, and they were living in Brussels at the time. Cathy was going to help Lorraine wallpaper that particular day. When she let me off in the church parking lot across from the school, I got out of the car with mixed emotions and waved goodbye as she drove off. I would be the only student from Meppen attending Brussels High School that year. Just a little hesitant, I walked slowly up the sidewalk towards that large stone structure.

The first person I met was Joe "Ford" Klockenkemper from Batchtown. We already knew each other because of our mutual love of baseball. I had played ball against his brothers the previous summer. I noticed that Ford's collar was not buttoned and he was tieless. I was thrilled when he announced, "You don't have to wear a tie." Ford was a senior; I thought he should know. Besides, the day was going to get hot and the tie already felt uncomfortable. Off it came and I delightedly stuffed it into my hand-carried book bag.

Ford showed me to my classroom. Walking through the door, I saw my future classmates for the first time. To my

horror, though, I was the only boy in the room not wearing a tie! I was to find out later that Ford was a happy-go-lucky type of student, a nonconformist and one of the sloppiest dressers in school. On the positive side, Ford was popular, outgoing, helpful, and fun to have as a friend. Just for the record, on my second day of school, I wore a tie.

Freshmen at Brussels Community High School had no choice of subjects in the fall of 1940. Everyone was assigned to four classes: English, Algebra I, Latin I, and General Science. I had purchased a used set of books from a girl who had been a freshman the previous year.

The first day of school had been an orientation day. Informed of the rules and regulations, we met all our teachers, a different one for each subject, which was quite a revelation for me. At St. Joseph's there had been one teacher for four grades. One thing didn't change, though: I still had nuns for teachers. Although BCHS was a public high school, it had been staffed exclusively by the Sisters of Divine Providence from Normandy, Missouri, since the school opened in 1932.

The Latin teacher, Sr. Consilia, gave me the impression the first day that she was the sternest disciplinarian, although her sister, Sr. Benigna, was the principal. My first impression proved correct. Sr. Consilia carried a little black notebook in her pocket that contained the names of all students in the school, listed alphabetically by classes.

Every time she saw an infraction of a rule such as talking in study hall or running in the hallway, she would make a black mark in her book behind the offender's name. The more black marks you had, the lower your deportment grade. She had a favorite saying, "I don't see everything, but what I see, I see." Sr. Consilia seemed to enjoy her role as chief disciplinarian. Smiling and repeating her saying almost every time she made a black mark.

Sr. Consilia gave us the first lesson in our Latin book as an assignment for the next day. The book was divided into lessons rather than chapters, and she kept on with the routine of a new lesson each day except on days we were having a major test. Unfortunately for me, my used Latin book had the first several pages missing, including the first lesson. I went to school the next day totally unprepared for the first assignment of my high school career. Then, to my dismay, Sr. Consilia said that each class member had to come up to her desk, read each of ten Latin sentences, and then give the English translation. Luckily she asked for volunteers, and several eager students responded, lining up across the front of the room. Ever the lover of black marks, Sr. Consilia used the same system for grading. She would make a black mark for each mispronunciation or wrong translation. Watching those black marks piling up caused some students to get flustered and make still more errors.

I had three things going for me. I had been a Mass server for five years and, back then, our responses were said in Latin. Also, I could remember what I heard and, lastly, I stayed near the end of the line.

Before my turn came, I had listened to that lesson being red from Sr. Consilia's Latin book twenty times. When my turn finally came, I recited rather than read the Latin sentences and was able to give the English translations quite accurately.

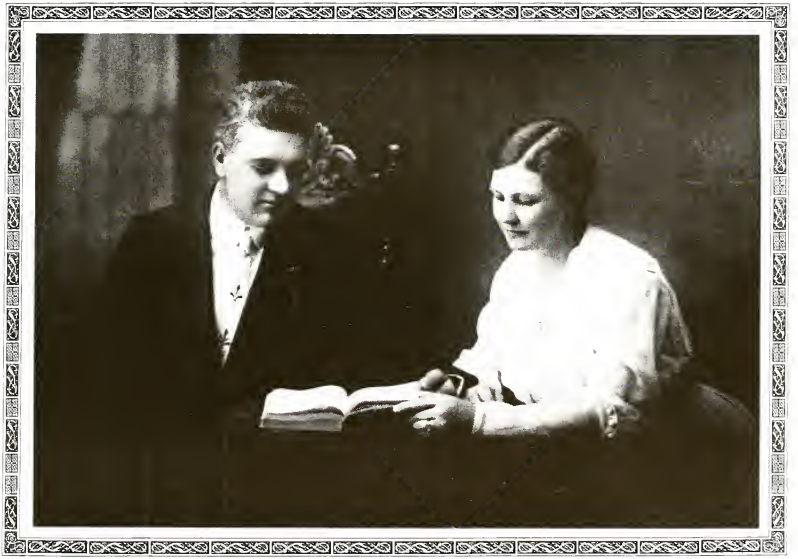
Fortunately those were the only pages missing from my Latin book. After taking three years of Latin, I still remember that first lesson best of all. The first sentence was "Pictura spectatae." Translation: Look at the picture. Perhaps if more pages had been missing from the book, I would have a greater knowledge of Latin today.

After two weeks of school, our English teacher informed us we were going to learn about parliamentary procedure and then elect class officers. We had a total of twenty-five students at the start of our freshman year. I knew the first names of all the boys in my class, but I hadn't made an effort to learn the names of the girls. As the nominations were made for vice-

president, the names were written on the board; all were girls. Since I couldn't associate the girls' names with a particular person, I voted for a name that most appealed to me: a girl whose last name was Arnold. The girl elected vice-president had the surname of Schmidt. The boy elected for president of the class was named Robert. I was to learn later that this Schmidt girl had harbored a "crush" on Robert since the days when they were in grade school. Robert was to become one of my best friends, as was the Schmidt girl. I was quite surprised when I was nominated for treasurer, and even more shocked when elected. I guess this was the students' way of saying that the kid from Meppen was accepted. Then we held our first formal meeting. The newly elected secretary was told that her position included taking the minutes of each meeting. That our secretary didn't fully comprehend the duties of her office was evident when we held our second meeting several weeks later. After the president called the meeting to order, he asked the secretary to read the minutes of the previous meeting. She read, "The minutes of the first meeting of the freshman class of BCHS were 23."

In retrospect, my attending Brussels Community High School was a very wise decision. Not only did I obtain an excellent high school education but I also met my future wife, the Schmidt girl. Marcy and I were married in 1949.

After graduating from Western Illinois University in 1950, I obtained a high school teaching position in Kampsville. The following year, I signed a contract to teach at Brussels Community High School. On the first day of school in 1951, I walked toward the same stone building that I had entered so apprehensively as a beginning student in 1940. Although I was again filled with apprehension, this time I did not remove my tie.



VIII Poetry

POETRY

Poetry no longer has the cultural significance that it once had in America. The coming of movies, radio, television, and computers in our century has deflected public interest away from serious literature, and modern poetry has also become more difficult to understand. The best poems of Hart Crane, John Berryman, Adrienne Rich, and Sylvia Plath may be brilliant, but they have few readers outside of our colleges and universities.

In past generations, however, things were different. Many people enjoyed poetry, and they often memorized favorite poems and passed them along. Reading textbooks such as the famous *McGuffey Eclectic Readers* included poetry, and many a student memorized and recited such classroom favorites as Eugene Field's "The Duel" (better known as "The Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat"), Whittier's "The Barefoot Boy," and Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride."

The one prose memoir in this section, June Speer Chatterton's "Poetry at Home and at School," reflects an exposure to poetry that was typical many decades ago, and it shows, too, how lasting the impact of poems learned in childhood can be. She closes by mentioning that her early reading has even prompted her to write poetry, and that has surely been true of many other people as well.

The other authors in this section are poets, too, and their writing reveals the capacity of poems to record memories, display insight, and delight the reader.

Most of the poems are traditional in form. Marie Ostrander Brooks' "Memories of My Home Town," for example, employs couplets in four-line stanzas. Her subject is conventional—the vanished small-town world of her childhood—but the nicely wrought poem also suggests the power of memory to anchor us to the landscape of our past. Lorna G. Moore's "Memories of Childhood" is similar but is focused on the more intimate world of the family farm—which is now so distant in time, but is still recoverable through memory.

That free verse works equally well to reflect the remembered past is evident in a few of the poems. Faye Christian Perry's "Sunday Evening in Winter" uses well-chosen details to depict the simple world of her home many years ago, when the family was apt to be kept indoors by a heavy snowfall. Jack Iorio's "Autumn Haze" is a more complex poem that employs a vivid fall memory to symbolize the end of boyhood, with its rituals of togetherness. His precisely worded piece is developed in a single long sentence.

Two of the poems focus on people of the past. Bernice Lovekamp's "Schoolmarm" is a celebration of the hardworking country school teacher of "the good old days"—which were not so good for her—before consolidation brought that era to an end. Jessie Lynch's "Papa" is a vivid recollection of her father. Starting with a sudden reversal of the opening line, it depicts a "quiet man" who was nevertheless excitable and outspoken when it came to Roosevelt and the Democrats. A free verse poem, for the most part, it employs occasional rhyme to help bring the piece to a close.

Two of the poems are not recollective, but focus instead on the process of aging. Eleanor Schuett's "The Eyes of Love" is a gently humorous testament to love's impact on our perception, while Martha Elven's "Ode to the Nineties" captures a special moment in a very long life. The latter effectively balances the elderly speaker's awareness of the passing of time with her almost childlike anticipation of the party in her honor.

All of the poems in this section of the book, especially "Gramma" Elven's, demonstrate that writing poetry is not just for the young. It is a demanding kind of mental exercise that can be done effectively at any age—if you have the talent.

John E. Hallwas

POETRY AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL

June Speer Chatterton

I am eighty years old but I remember well my mother reading poems to me and my two sisters, and I remember too some of the poems we read in school.

We did not have many books at home, but my mother had an amazing memory. She could recite poems and sing songs that her mother had taught her. Since my grandmother was born just after the Civil War, one sad song that was passed from her to mother and then to me reflected the sorrow of that period. I remember that it started, "The shot and the shell were falling," and it ended, "Tell mother I won't be coming home."

Some of the ditties Mother sang when we were very young were fun poems. We especially loved to hear mother sing "Little Birdie in the tree, in the tree, in the tree. / Little birdie in the tree sing a song to me." We would ask to have it sung over and over with perhaps "bluebird," "robin," or "red-bird" substituted for "birdie."

By the flickering light of a kerosene lamp, mother taught me my first prayer in 1914, when I was two years old. I still have the copy Mr. Frew, a friend of mother's, had given her for me. He and his wife did not have any children, but they later adopted a little girl who learned the same prayer. It is a poem that goes like this:

> Now I wake and see the light.
> Twas God who kept me through the night.
> To him, I lift my voice and pray
> That He will keep me through the day.
> If I should die before it's done
> Oh, God accept me through your Son.

When I was five years old I started to Centerville, a country school. My teacher, Miss Frae McClelland, gave me my first reader, called *The Sunshine Primer*. It cost 40¢. It had a picture of a little boy and girl sitting under a tree with a bright yellow sun shining in the background.

Birds seemed to be a favorite topic, and among the poems in that book I read the following:

> The north wind doth blow
> And we shall have snow,
> And what will the Robin do then? Poor thing!
> He will sit in the barn
> And keep himself warm,
> And hide his head under his wing. Poor thing!

As years went by, Mother read us the poetry of James Whitcomb Riley. How proud I was when in fourth grade at school I recited all four stanzas of "The Raggedy Man," which is written in the dialect of a child. The first stanza is this:

> O the Raggedy Man! He works for Pa.
> An' he's the goodest man ever you saw!
> He comes to our house every day
> An' waters the horses an' feeds 'em hay,
> An' he opens the shed—an' we all jist laugh
> When he drives out our little old wobble-ly calf;
> An'nen-ef our hired girl says he can,
> He milks the cow for 'Lizabuth Ann—
> Ain't he a' awful good Raggedy Man?
> Raggedy! Raggedy! Raggedy Man!

As I progressed through school, I read from the *Studies in Reading* series—red-bound books by Searson and Martin. My teacher had us memorize poems like this:

> There are many flags in many lands,
> There are flags of every hue.

But there is no flag, however grand,
Like our own "Red, White, and Blue."

In seventh grade we learned famous poems like "Excelsior" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. There was also the great British poem by Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," which was proclaimed to be "the most widely known poem in our language." It is certainly one of the most well-known. At the beginning it reads,

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly over the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

It is a meditation on the lives of little known people who are buried in a country cemetery.

Since I read and heard beautiful poetry in my early years, both at home and at school, it has left me with such an appreciation that at age eighty I continue to put my own thoughts into poetry for a very enjoyable pastime.

MEMORIES OF MY HOME TOWN
Marie Ostrander Brooks

I remember on this spot there stood
The largest tree in the neighborhood.
Nearby, there was a small clear brook
Where I'd pretend to bait my hook.

Railroad tracks ran through the town;
Everyone stopped when gates went down.
There were no local billiard halls;
We'd never heard of shopping malls.

Druggist and grocer filled our need
And most folks lived as the law decreed.
Life was simple, as was our fare,
And those who had would gladly share.

Now concrete covers familiar land,
No trees remain where buildings stand,
No sight or sound of the small clear brook.
I close my eyes for one more look.

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

Lorna G. Moore

In the quiet hush of the evening
When all the world seems at rest,
I think of my happy yesterdays
And the things that I loved best.
I recall the trees in the orchard,
The groan of the old windmill,
A cool drink of water at the spring,
And cattle standing on the hill;
My mother at the kitchen window,
My father at the old barn door,
The flickering flame of the oil lamp
Like a beacon from a distant shore.

SUNDAY EVENING IN WINTER

Faye Christian Perry

On cold Sunday evenings
after the wood box had been filled
and two lumps of coal fetched
to hold the fire overnight
we'd have supper of sliced and fried
cold boiled potatoes and scrambled eggs
and a pot of orange-pekoe tea
(we had never heard of any other kind).
When the dishes were washed and dried
and another chunk of wood
put in the stove
we rested and talked awhile;
then we popped corn in a
cast iron skillet on the
old black cook stove
'till we had a dishpan full.
All six of us took a soup bowl
full of popcorn, and then
another if we were a-mind to,
and all the while outside it was
snowing like blue-blazes.

AUTUMN HAZE

Jack Iorio

Catalpas are rare now.
We say the big leaves kill
the lawn grass in the fall
and in the spring
its white flowers
are a sweep-up chore.
We have forgotten
the old times
and tribal ways
when fall began
with guarded ritual
that spelled the end of summer
—boy summer—
as we sat
cross-legged and somber
in unbroken circle
smoking the slender pod
—brown and tree dried—
tears rolling down our cheeks
as we blew out acrid smoke
that was to be
the autumn haze
of that
our Indian Summer!

SCHOOLMARM

Bernice Lovekamp

Before consolidation, on a plot near our farm,
Stood a country schoolhouse with its country schoolmarm.
She taught all the classes from one up through eight.
Planning and grading kept her working till late.
She filled many roles, a "Jill of all trades"—
Custodian, counselor, recorder of grades.
She was the music teacher, and plays she'd rehearse.
She was the art teacher, too, and also school nurse.
She carried in coal from the shed outdoors,
And she carried out ashes and swept the floors.
When a snowstorm came, she scooped a track
Up to the front door—and to the houses out back.
She went to school early when winter days came
To coax the fire to a warming flame.
She had no tenure, sick days, or insurance.
She deserved a medal for her endurance.
For all this labor, how much was her pay?
Perhaps fifty dollars—per month, not per day.
Few teachers today would care for the ways
That schoolmarms worked in "the good old days."

PAPA

Jessie Lynch

Papa was a quiet man—
Until someone berated the Democrats,
And then he'd fly into a rage
And fill the house with arguing.
It was the era of the Great Depression,
And according to Papa,
Roosevelt saved the nation.
What with the W.P.A. and the C.C.C.,
Fireside chats and polio pleas,
I can't deny my Papa's view that
Roosevelt came and helped our nation
Lick the terrible, awful Depression.
But he wasn't perfect;
Twas plain to see
His long, drawn out speeches
Were torture to me.
But Papa sat to the radio glued,
And nobody could talk or make a sound
Without him getting ready to pound
On the culprit who blurred the words
Of the greatest president he'd ever heard.
Papa is gone now, placed in his grave;
Roosevelt, too, is in the ground laid.
Nostalgia comes over me once in awhile,
And I'd give a lot to see my Papa smile
As he sat by the radio listening and praying
To hear what the great president was saying.

THE EYES OF LOVE

Eleanor Schuett

He doesn't look romantic
To other girls, I know;
He's just a guy who's growing old—
And perhaps a little slow—
Whose hair is now a memory
And who's sporting store-bought teeth;
Yes, other gals could pass him by
And miss the guy beneath.
But I, ah, when I look at him
His age just disappears,
And I marvel at the youth of him
Who's loved me through the years.

AN ODE TO THE NINETIES

Martha "Gramma" Elven

The seasons come, the seasons go,
Faster and faster the older we grow.
Sitting by my window I watch them go by;
Snow softly falls from a late Winter sky
People are coming up our lane;
I know each one and call them by name.
Sigrid, my daughter, planned this big party
For her old Mom, and I'm still hale and hearty.
There will be food and a very big cake
With ninety-five candles—what a blaze that
will make!

IX Neighbors

NEIGHBORS

The neighborhood is a crucial American institution, and much that is praiseworthy results from neighbors. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickins wrote, "What we've got to do is to keep up our spirits, and be neighborly. We shall come out in the end, never fear." And the biblical admonition is that we should "love thy neighbor as thyself."

In earlier times, particularly in the agrarian society, friendship between neighbors was a shared value and, often, an economic necessity. Close friendships were often formed, and in the best sense of the word, neighbors often represented extended families. But after the Industrial Revolution, when farming gave way to manufacturing, less need for neighbors seemed to exist. Long hours laboring in the factories were the norm; increasingly, mothers worked outside the home. Later, the women's movement held grudging disdain for the mothering, nurturing role. Crime flourished, and narcissism increasingly isolated people. Some neighbors were close, particularly in ethnic neighborhoods; however, distrust and disinterest in neighbors was a byproduct of the time. Many people have never been in their neighbors' houses; others just nod at each other. Neighborly civility too often was gone, a development that has yet to reach its most serious levels. America is poorer because of this serious and grave social change. Something of great moment in the nation is terribly diminished. It is well, indeed, to look back and admire how neighbors helped and loved each other.

These memoirs well demonstrate the power and influence of neighbors, whether they are local or from elsewhere in the world. Phyllis T. Fenton shared her experiences living among Jewish, Japanese, and Chinese people, and learned well that minority people were, indeed, neighbors. Writing of encounters with Chinese people, Bea Tholen explained her experiences and her "lifelong interest in Chinese." Rosemary Rausch shared a wonderful Christmas story in which her valued neighbors many miles from her home welcomed her in a special manner.

Other writers shared memoirs of neighbors who enriched their lives. In this regard, Florence Hoffman Hesterberg wrote: "People worked very hard, but you seldom heard them grumble. They never rushed; they took time to talk." Explaining the positive influence on both her and the community in which she lived of a successful businessman, she shared the wonderful effect such a person can have on others. Louise Efnor demonstrated so very well how a friend and neighbor can bring lifelong pleasure; and lifelong friends and neighbors hugely enriched the life of Darlene Purdy. Older neighbors, Mary Lou Adams explained, were never to be forgotten, as the spinsters "opened their doors and hearts to me when I was lonely and needed someone."

Times change, not always for the best. The neighborliness of earlier and better days had a superb effect on the nation and its system of values and behaviors. We are, in fact, to be our brother's keeper. It is in a social order of valuing the concept of good neighbors that America can help realize the greatness of the American Creed, the political hope of humankind.

Alfred J. Lindsey

ED HULTING, NEIGHBOR AND FRIEND

Margaret M. DeDecker

Thinking back to my teenage years, I did not foresee that one of our neighbors in the striped bib overalls and beat-up hat would become Ed Hulting, noted founder of Hulting Hybrids.

I graduated from Gilbert School, a one-room school located in Geneseo Township, with Mr. Hulting's daughter Edith and two other relatives of his. Our teacher was Doris Morrow from town. Amelia, Ed's wife, had surgery, and they were in the process of moving into the new brick house on their farm. Being a good neighbor, my father offered them my help. I was all of sixteen and totally inexperienced. I cooked breakfast for the hired man, serving him one piece of bacon, one egg, and toast. I later learned that he went into town for more to eat. No one told me to do any different.

Ed was full of sage advice for me such as, "Remember, Margaret, it is just as easy to love a rich man as it is to love a poor man." I listened to him just as much as I listened to my father's advice—very little, indeed no different than teenagers today.

Just before we moved into the neighborhood, we had a year of fighting the chinch bugs and drought. On his farm, Ed Hulting poured tar in strips throughout the corn fields that he and his son Cyril were developing. They sprayed outside of the first fields of hybrid corn. The regular corn went 20 bushels to the acre, and the seed corn went to 60 bushels. Cyril worked for his dad for $20 a month. Ed did not know if he could pay him, so he told him to go to the University of Illinois for a year. Cyril did go to the university and spent a year in the engineering department. He worked for his room and board which was $192 a year, and his tuition was $38 that year.

The economy was very bad. Corn was selling for 13¢ a bushel. Ed hauled 2,000 bushels in his Model T truck to feed his cattle and hogs. Corn was also burned in the cook stove. You could get a lot of BTUs out of a little corn. All of us in the neighborhood were using corn in the cook stove. That winter, Ed bought the seed house in town and the ground up to East North Street. The ground was planted in corn. Nothing went to waste for these frugal people.

Geneseo wanted a swimming pool in the early 1950s. The pool was built with much cooperation of the people of Geneseo and the surrounding area. Ed donated part of his land for it. After the pool was built, you could see Ed drive by in the evenings, usually with his grandson Wayne beside him in his pickup truck. Ed really enjoyed watching the youngsters of the community enjoying the pool.

Later, Geneseo wanted a community center and, again, Ed donated the land. In the later 1970s, this land was dedicated and named G. E. Hulting Park. Ed was to become the first president of the Park Board. Now there is a day care center on that land, and there is talk of building an indoor swimming pool there.

During the years since 1929, Ed started an experiment with one field far back from the public where he pulled tassels and tried to improve his corn. By 1931, he had seed ready for sale. No one was interested in buying it, so he traded 200 bags to an implement dealer for farm equipment. In 1933, Ed and another grower consulted with Lester Phiester and became Phiester dealers; soon, though, he broke away to develop the Hulting Hybrids trademark. He employed many area people for detasseling in the hot, sticky days and, later, to harvest the corn. The corn was taken to town to be sorted, shelled, and bagged. My father was a corn sorter until he was in his eighties. There were also salesmen and clerical help in the seed house, so many people were employed in this industry.

Ed and his family had great faith in the Lord and were members of the Swedish Lutheran now known as the First Lutheran Church on Main Street. His memory will be preserved in the church by a large stained glass window facing Main Street. It is known as the Hulting Window, dedicated in

his memory by the family. Hulting Hybrids was sold to Ferry-Morse on October 15, 1972. Ed passed away a month after the sale, and you can see the three ears of corn and the Hulting Hybrids' emblem on his gravestone in Oakwood Cemetary not far from our plot. As I recall all of this and feel both joy and sadness, I am comforted by believing firmly that we shall indeed be neighbors again.

THE OLD NEIGHBORS

Mary Lou Adams

My entry into this world, as I understand it, was not planned; it just happened. My sister was nine years old and my brother was fourteen when this bundle (me) was added to the household. It was October of 1924.

I was born in Pekin, Illinois. My grandmother lived with us, so I established a relationship with older people when I was quite young. I still have a fondness for such people. I apparently was a lonely child. Before the age of ten, I hadn't gained any special skills in making friendships, so I must have found comfort in the older neighbors.

Although I was really very young, I remember the lady who lived across the street. I called her Grandma Leach; she was blind and very old. We often had tea together at my little table, and we drank from my doll cups. I can see her now (How did she get onto that small chair beside me?); and what we talked about I have no idea.

Another neighbor who had a bird in a cage fascinated me, and I visited her and the pet quite often.

I was just going into second grade when we moved to Peoria, where I soon sought more good neighbors. They had to be kindly and friendly to put up with a skinny, insecure little girl who was often showing up at their doors, which were always open.

Three widowed sisters lived around the corner. I sat with them on their front porch, which ran the full length of the house. I remember feeling so small in such big chairs. When it was cold outside, I was invited into the sun room. There I was offered and enjoyed many cookies and candies.

Right across the street from that house was a grandmother who lived alone. She had a swing on her porch. I spent much time with her, too, although I remember her the least. I must have spent so much time with the three ladies because I was sure I'd be offered sweets at their house, and I was never disappointed.

Around the corner and up the street I discovered what they called shirt-tail relations, usually related through marriage, I guess. There were three ladies who had never been married, and a brother who drank a lot. They were the sweetest people. I spent much time with them; except, little as I was, I was aware there was always fear the brother would come home belligerent and cause a scene. This household possessed a great library of books, including the whole series of Nancy Drew works and many more that I borrowed. I spent hours of enjoyment at that time in my life by living the fantasy of those book people.

Eventually, these older neighbors all passed away. I grew up and cultivated a few of those "how-to-make-friends" skills, but the friends I will never forget are those older neighbors who opened their doors and hearts to me when I was lonely and needed someone to pay attention to me and to sincerely enjoy my company. They were a form of caregivers long before the word became popular.

FARM NEIGHBORS

Florence Hesterberg

Years ago when I was growing up, neighbors were not just acquaintances who lived down the road, but dear friends who shared good and bad times with each other. They were characterized by always lending a helping hand when it was needed.

I lived on a farm three miles from Maeystown, Illinois, all through my childhood and until I got married. My family's relationship with our neighbors was special. Several times a week we would visit at each other's houses, especially in the winter. No one traveled much by car in the winter because the roads were just plain dirt and, when it rained, snowed, or frosted, they were muddy and practically impassable. Most of the travel was done on foot, and usually there was a path across the fields to the neighboring houses. When it snowed or was bitter cold, Mom would bundle my brother and me up and away we'd go. I remember her telling me about the time when I was a baby wrapped in blankets, and my dad carried me across the fields of one of our neighbors for an evening visit. When my mother unwrapped me, she discovered that he had carried me upside-down all the way.

When someone in the neighborhood had a birthday, all the neighbors gathered for the celebration. Often one of the rooms was cleared of furniture, and one of the neighbors would play the accordion or the violin as the grownups danced. The youngsters would play games or just sit around and watch them dance. About midnight, the woman of the house prepared a lunch of sausage, homemade bread and butter, apple butter, cottage cheese, cake, or pie, along with hot coffee which had simmered in a large granite coffee pot on the kitchen range all evening. This coffee pot was unique, for it was filled with water and the coffee grounds were poured directly into the water. When the brew was almost ready, the grounds settled to the bottom of the pot. Sometimes, instead of the usual lunch, the hostess would make a huge pot of chicken soup or chili for the occasion.

It usually cooked in a cold packer or a wash boiler, it would bubble away on the cook stove until serving time. I remember that one of the men would complain that the soup or chili was too hot to eat, and he exclaimed, "You eat that old hot stuff and sweat it right back in the bowl!" Two of the ladies decided to teach him a lesson: When the next birthday party came, they set a bowl of chili in the snow about a half hour before lunch. When this fellow sat down to eat, they brought in that icy bowl of chili. He was surely angry, but he did not complain ever again.

The favorite pastime for the men on long winter evenings was playing pinochle. One of the gentlemen was a hard loser, and several times he became so frustrated when he and his partners lost the game that he'd take the deck of cards, lift the iron lid of the cook stove, and throw them into the fire. While the men played pinochle, the ladies chatted. If the lady of the house had a quilt in a frame, they would all quilt.

Once when the neighbors gathered at our house for a birthday, I was warned ahead of time that I should not get out the new pair of skates that I had gotten for Christmas. A new pair of ice skates were something special and really a luxury, so, of course, I just couldn't resist the temptation to show them off. I decided to sneak them out of the closet when I knew Mom was too busy to notice. One of the lads, who was always a little naughty at these neighborhood gatherings, decided to see how sharp the skates were by pushing them across my mother's dressing table. I didn't have to tell Mom what happened because the next morning she immediately discovered the cuts and knew exactly what had taken place. Needless to say, she wasn't too happy with me. I think I even got a few swats on my backside.

One March evening it began to snow, and there was a bad blizzard which resulted in drifting. Our neighbor who lived on a farm about a mile away had pushed his son's car out of a snowdrift. The son and his family proceeded to their home about ten miles away, and the father went back to his house. He was warming his hands over the kitchen range when suddenly he dropped dead. When one of his children telephoned Dad to come over right away, he bundled up and ran most of the way to this neighbor's house in the blinding snowstorm. He told us afterwards that half of the time he couldn't tell if he was on the road or in the fields. Never once did he think of the danger of him having a heart attack on the way. He knew his neighbors needed him, and that was all that mattered. He stayed throughout the night with this family. The wife had a serious heart condition and the shock of her husband's death was almost too much for her. She became very ill, and the family feared for her life. The undertaker was unable to get through the roads until almost noon the next day, when the snow plow finally cleared them. By the next morning, the news of the tragedy had spread to other neighbors via the old crank telephone, and more of them arrived to lend a helping hand. Because the wife was confined to her bed, the doctor had to come to the house to treat her, and because she was unable to attend the two days of funeral home visitation or the funeral, the neighbors took turns staying with her. They also all brought food for the family. The day of the funeral the undertaker brought the husband's body back to our neighbor's house so the wife could see him; then they took him to the church. It was a traumatic experience for the family, and they were so appreciative of the neighbors' help and concern for them.

Neighboring farmers typically helped each other with various chores. In the fall of the year, they would assist each other saw down trees with a two man crosscut saw. Then they would haul the logs on a horse-drawn wagon to a place on the premises where they were set up teepee style. When the stack was large enough, they sawed the logs into shorter pieces which were used to feed the heating stoves and the kitchen ranges throughout the winter. They would also cut corn fodder for the horses and hay for the cows, a job accomplished by a gas-powered machine called a cutting box or a "hexal bonk."

Butchering day was always a big event. Most farmers slaughtered two or three hogs shortly before Christmas so there would be plenty of fresh pork sausage, liver sausage, blood sausage, head cheese, and summer sausage for holiday visitors. The ladies all gathered on butchering day to help prepare morning lunch, noon meal, and another lunch later in the afternoon. It was their job to fry samples of the sausage before it was stuffed to make sure it was seasoned right. They were also designated to wash all the greasy utensils when the butchering was completed. Most of the time, the women rendered the lard, too.

In the summer threshing, many helping hands were required; neighborhood men and their wives would help each other with this chore. The men would bring their rack wagons pulled by a team of horses to haul the bundles of wheat from the fields to the threshing machine, while the ladies helped the farmer's wife prepare the food. Sometimes, they plucked six or seven spring chickens, and got them ready for the noon meal. They also peeled peaches and apples which came from the farm orchard and baked homemade pies. Loaves and loaves of homemade bread had to be baked, no matter how hot the kitchen got from the wood-burning cook stove. Vegetables were harvested from the garden and had to be peeled and washed. Sometimes one of the ladies even had to go to the potato patch and dig some potatoes for the dinner. Fresh butter had to be churned. Remember, there was no refrigeration in those days, so most of the food could not be prepared the day before. The cream for the butter was put in a tin bucket with a lid and hung in the well or cistern until it was ready to be churned.

Sometimes, a storm would stop the threshing for two or three days until the shocks of wheat were dried out. The food usually diminished pretty fast as the threshing crew often stayed with the farm family until the threshing started again, which sometimes took two or three days. When the threshing began again, the ladies had to start all over again with their cooking. Can you imagine how tired they must have been? But I can remember that they rarely complained. Having so much fun doing things together, they didn't seem to mind the work.

The ladies pieced many beautiful quilts during the long winter evenings. The patches were all sewn together by hand. When the quilt top was completed, it was put into a wooden frame and the neighbor ladies were invited for a quilting. Of course, there was much good food served again at these quiltings. No matter what people did in those early days, food and fellowship were very important.

People worked very hard, but you seldom heard them grumble. They never rushed; they took time to wave when they met their neighbors; and they took the time to talk to them. There was love and concern for one another, and I look back to those days with warmth in my heart. I am very proud and fortunate to have been a part of this era of neighborliness.

A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS

Rosemary Rausch

I was 23 when the call came in early November for me: The organist at St. Irene's Church in Warrenville, the neighboring town, was ill and had to get away for a rest. Could I play the organ for Sunday Mass and direct the children's choir? It was November, and she hoped to recover by Christmas. I accepted the challenge.

Each Saturday morning I took the Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin train from Aurora to Warrenville and walked from the train stop to the church. There I met with a dozen youngsters—boys and girls—to practice music for Sunday morning Mass. One of the mothers was there to help me get acquainted and "encourage the kids to sing." Barbara was a great help.

A few weeks before Christmas, the pastor informed me that the regular organist would not be returning, and I was needed to prepare, rehearse, and play the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass. Another challenge! So with Barbara's help, we rehearsed Saturdays for Christmas.

It was Christmas Eve. My mother suggested that I take our little ten-year-old friend Monica along for the trip and Midnight Mass. As we walked down the hill through the thickly falling snow, I felt that Monica and I were "on the way to Bethlehem." When we boarded the train, I noticed a young couple with a baby. "How fitting," I thought.

When our train arrived in Warrenville, the snow was already deep. Still, people from the village were walking, too, all going to St. Irene's for Midnight Mass. At church, the children were wide-awake with enthusiasm, eager to sing.

After checking our music and a brief rehearsal, we were ready to begin our carols, followed by the Mass, complete with "Gloria" and "Alleluias." The kids did their best. They looked like the shepherds' children, but they sang like angels. The Mass was beautiful, and the church was packed with warm-clad people in festive spirits.

When the services were over and the people left for home, Barbara drove Monica and me through the deep snow to the train station. Snow was accumulating at a rapid rate, and it was 2:30 a.m. It was no surprise that the train from Chicago could not get through the snow. The station agent told us there would be no trains from Chicago to Aurora going through Warrenville until noon Christmas Day!

"Then you'll have to come to our house tonight," Barbara informed Monica and me. Her Christian hospitality was overflowing. There was truly "room in the inn"—the Garceaus' home—for us that night. Barbara's husband John, the baby, and little Mary-Monica Garceau gave us the same welcome that Barbara and her other three children had shared when we arrived at their home. We were snowbound!

The first thing I did was to call my mother in Aurora. She would be waiting for me. I told her that because of the blizzard, no trains from Chicago would be coming until Christmas Day. My mother told me she had already gone out to shovel the sidewalk several times. She was happy to hear the Garceaus were befriending Monica and me.

We slept "soon and fast"—Monica and I. The Garceau children, whose rooms we shared, loved us. At breakfast Christmas morn, we were one big happy family. Since I was scheduled to help serve Christmas Day dinner at St. Charles Hospital in Aurora, Barbara and John decided to drive me to Aurora so I could get home and to work on time. And they did—the whole family!

Often I've been asked to tell about my most memorable Christmas. I remember this "different Christmas," 1951, when I was snowbound in Warrenville, and the wonderful Christian "neighbors," the Garceaus, who welcomed me into their home.

A SPECIAL FRIEND

Louise E. Efnor

Thoughts of yesteryear swept through my mind as I traveled home after visiting my good friend and neighbor at the hospital. I remembered that day a number of years ago when my husband was in the hospital and this neighbor had answered my call for help. My plea came after the laundry tub came tumbling from the wall, spilling its entire contents of clean clothes and water over the entire floor. Tears were flowing freely, mingling with all the spilled water, when Mary came rushing over to help. Together, we wrung the clothes out (and had to rinse them again), mopped up all of the water, and talked about what should be done about that laundry tub. Things are just much better when you have a friend with whom to talk the problem out! We have shared many such experiences over the forty-four years of being neighbors—baby-sitting each others children, carpooling them to various activities at school, and sharing in their 4-H years by being co-4-H leaders.

Both of our sons played football, so we attended most of their home games when they performed on the home field. One particular game we will never forget. We always went prepared for all kinds of weather, with blankets to sit on and wrap up in and warm jackets, too. It was just starting to sprinkle rain when we arrived at the field this one particular time. We thought it was just a light shower and would soon clear up, so we found our favorite place on the bleachers and prepared to cheer on our team. As the game started and progressed, so did the rain. That light sprinkle turned into a downpour! A canopy was formed with one of our blankets, and we sat huddled together, undaunted, until the end of the game, which, I might add, was worth it because our team won the game!

Our 4-H years, as both leaders and parents of 4-Hers, is a "book yet to be written"—so much fun helping youngsters find just the right project to fit themselves, locating the right animals for their environment, and filling out endless records. Then there were the many trips to the Fulton County Fair to show these many projects and to exhibit the products of their creation. We sat through many livestock shows—our children started out showing Cheviot sheep and rabbits. Competition was keen among them and other 4-Hers, so we gave a smile of

encouragement to all participants—no playing favorites, you know, even if we did think our childrens' were the best.

My neighbor and I quite often packed a picnic lunch to take with us to the fair, but on one such occasion we decided to eat our lunch at one of the many food stands on the fairgrounds. By the time we had made the rounds of our youngsters' exhibits, and toured the livestock barns where we watched the grooming of the many animals to show that afternoon, it was time for a bite to eat. Hamburgers seemed to be the popular food for most of the lunch stands, so these we chose—mine with lots and lots of onion piled on it along with all the other essentials making for a really super sandwich. It was soooo good! Later in the afternoon, my thoughts about that hamburger changed a great deal and, evidently, so did my countenance because Mary kept asking me if I felt all right. She finally took me to the first aid tent and asked if they would help me. After giving me something for my "very upset stomach" and making sure I was on the road to recovery, the nurse thought I was well enough to make the trip home. What an experience! Mary and I have laughed about this a good many times.

I stopped by my neighbor's coming from town one day, and, as we were going to visit awhile, I had her put some ice cream which I had bought in her freezer, thinking that when I went home after our visiting that I would take it home. The day passed quickly—as it often does when good friends are visiting—and it was time to get home before the school bus arrived. So, leaving in a hurry, I forgot the ice cream—no big problem, though, for I could get it the next day and have another chat with my neighbor. The only problem was Mary's son who found the ice cream and, thinking it was his Mom's, ate quite a bit of it. Oh, well, what are neighbors for but to share with one another!

Sometimes Mary and her sister took vacations together. During these times, Mary left baked goods for her husband. One year she made several pies before she left, one of which she sent to be used by a particular organization which was serving refreshments. Another neighbor and I didn't know if she had sent her pie or not, so I thought I'd better check at her house and see about it. Her husband was not at home, but on the kitchen table was the most luscious-looking pie. So, packing it up in its container, I took it to the other neighbor's house for her to take along with hers to a meeting that night. All would have been well if the container for the pie had not been returned two weeks later. Mary wondered how her container had gotten there, when she had sent her pie in a disposable pie tin. Her husband had not mentioned anything about the dessert she had left for him, and she thought that strange because it was his favorite kind of pie. I had to admit that I was the culprit who had whisked that favorite confection away.

When seat belts became a standard feature of our cars, my neighbor and I had many discussions about them and just did not know if we liked them very much. I always feared being held by them while the car burned or was turned upside down in a body of water. We just did not trust them, so I was greatly surprised one day when Mary came to pick me up to go to a craft workshop at Lewistown. As I got in the car, she told me to fasten my seat belt. Looking at her to see if she really meant it, I saw that she also had her belt fastened (a first for both of us). It was a beautiful fall day when we traveled to Lewistown and both of us looked forward to an enjoyable day of working on crafts. I had a lovely piece of tapestry with which to make a tote bag, plus all the other essentials to go with it. We were busily chatting away about the crafts when we saw a state "line" machine coming across the bridge in front of us. To give the machine more room, Mary just pulled over to the side of the road and stopped her car. As she did this, we heard a loud noise from behind us and a CRUNCH. We had been hit squarely in the back by a loaded grain semi-truck. We really could tell people after this just how it felt to be hit by a truck! Very little damage was done to Mary's car, but we spent so much time getting affairs straightened out

and finding a doctor that we never did get to our workshop. Never mind, we both thanked God to be alive. The doctor said that my seat belt had probably kept me from having a broken neck; Mary's had also protected her. You can be sure that when we travel now, we fasten our seat belts and caution our passengers to get theirs fastened, too.

Many years have passed since we became neighbors, and through all of our experiences—the sharing, joys, sorrow (and the borrowing, too)—Mary and I are still good friends. This special neighbor has enriched my life immeasurably.

MEMORIES OF NEIGHBORS

Darlene Purdy

Neighbors. What a nice thought. It brings back so many memories. They start from the time you are married and have your own home and responsibilities. In our case, that was fifty-two years ago in LaHarpe, Illinois, when we became Murrell and Darlene Purdy. We identified people by their first names and knew they would be there for us in times of joy and sadness. During the first years, our two children were born. Our neighbor Dr. Mueller watched over us during the accidents, childhood diseases, and other problems.

After ten years, in 1951, we moved near Macomb to the Harvey Hunter farm in Emmet Township, McDonough County, where we found more friends and neighbors. On a cold day, the house was filled with people moving things in, unpacking boxes, and making beds. By night, most things seemed to be in place. What a great feeling—all because of our family, friends, and neighbors!

Then it was time to get the children into a new school. But we didn't need to fear. The teacher at the one-room Yard School was Mrs. Isla Johnson who made the children feel right at home. Soon the children were enjoying new friends, many who lived "just down the road." Community programs at the school soon got us acquainted with parents and the whole neighborhood.

One spring when Murrell was sick, Bill Lewis came with his "chore" tractor to milk, take care of the hogs, and do whatever was needed. Dale Kitch passed the word around, and many neighbors came to till and plant most of the fields. Bishop and Eithel Hughes were always there to teach us "young folks" a thing or two. Eithel and I would hunt mushrooms in the spring—she watched for the snakes! Our cherry tree provided a great time to get together. When Eithel, Minnie Lewis, and Betty Hunter came, we picked cherries all morning. If we couldn't reach some, Murrell put us in the bucket loader on the tractor and "carefully" took us up to where the big ones were. In the afternoon, we gathered around the table to pit cherries and visit. By mid-afternoon, the cherries were ready for freezing.

We raised ponies when the children were in grade school. That was fun for us and all the children around. Who could resist a pony colt! When we were preparing to show them, we had plenty of help in grooming them and cleaning the harness and carts. Some children went to the shows and parades with us. Murrell's dad, Lou Purdy, was with us at the time and really enjoyed the ponies along with his grandchildren and the neighborhood children.

Baling hay was a big event. It always seemed to come on the hottest, most-humid days. The hay crews didn't seem to mind. It was hard work handling the bales, but the boys liked being together and earning extra money.

Voting time in Emmet Township was not just another day; it was a special event. Going to the town hall on the top of the hill, you not only voted, but you sat on the old benches and chatted with neighbors. If Portia Hodges were around, she would play some familiar tunes on the piano. During that time,

Murrell served as a justice of the peace, what they call a trustee now. Then he became town clerk and served in that capacity for many years. The town officials held many of their meetings in our home.

Community gatherings in our pasture will long be remembered by young and old alike. We sat on bales of straw and put our food on hayracks. In the fall, the big iron kettle held the chili soup, and Jesse Byerly stirred it well with his hand-made paddle. Philip Lewis brought his pickup truck full of home grown watermelons. We counted 125 of us at one time. On one occasion, Ralph Fox brought the sweet corn for the iron kettle, and the rest of us furnished the finishing touches for that meal. On a July 4, when we had the food all set out and plates mostly filled, the clouds rolled in and it poured! When the clouds moved on, the men went to the top of the pasture hill, and we had a great fireworks display! The little tots, teenagers with boyfriends and girlfriends, and the "old folks" all thought that was an evening to remember. In later years, the "get-togethers" were moved to Bill and Minnie Lewis's yard where it was easier for us older folks to move around. Then, one by one, we lost many of our dear neighbors, but not our precious memories.

Times have changed, the children have grown, and all but a few are out of the "neighborhood." A new generation is here, but that is how God planned it. Things get quiet so I sit and reminisce, or call someone and chat. Minnie Lewis and I still have some good visits. Murrell, Ralph Hunter, and Gaylord Hoke keep up on the latest in farming over the phone. Or I might call Helen Sperry with a "Hi, how have you been?" It's good to keep in touch, and it brightens my day.

A LESSON IN DIVERSITY

Phyllis T. Fenton

Back in the middle 1920s, when I was growing up in Chicago in the south side neighborhood called Englewood, most of our neighbors were middle-class Americans who lived and thought and looked pretty much like each other.

That was true until the sixth grade when the teacher, during a lesson on immigration, pointed out that there were two Jewish boys in our classroom whose families were new immigrants to America. Each family owned and operated a tailor shop on 67th Street and handled the neighborhood dry cleaning and fur storage, as well. Each family lived in back of its stores, and the boys seemed to need friends and social life beyond their contacts during school hours.

The teacher's point was not to identify strange neighbors among us, but to illustrate the variety of Americans who came to this country. When each boy told the class why his parents had emigrated, the stories were similar. Leaving Russia because of the pogroms against the Jews, they traveled across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad to Vladivostok, then boarded a ship to San Francisco, went on to Chicago by train, and came to our Englewood neighborhood where they continued to work in their old world trade as tailors. Selecting Englewood for business, and not one of the city's Jewish enclaves, probably accounted for the social isolation of the children.

Also from a faraway world were the Japanese who ran an import store on 63rd Street. When my mother wanted something very artistic for a special gift, we would walk down there and wonder at the fabulous collection of small ivory carvings, delicate wooden boxes, and paper and silk wares from this exotic land. My mother usually selected a beautifully colored butterfly brooch.

We never saw the family of the polite and sober looking Japanese clerk, nor did we know why he was there in our middle-class neighborhood where there was such a slim demand for Japanese merchandise. By the early 1930 Depression days, however, he had closed shop. I can only conjecture in retrospect that he was an outpost of the Yamanaka Import Company whose headquarters were at North Michigan Avenue and the Chicago River. Eventually the organization was identified as masters of a spy ring.

However, the neighbors who gave us drama and suspense were the Chinese who ran a hand laundry across the street from the Jewish tailors. They spoke a minimal pigeon English. You took your laundry to their cubby hole of a shop, or they came to your home to collect it, carrying it in a sack the way Santa Claus carried his bag full of toys.

But the Chinese created shivers of dread through the children up and down Yale Avenue. Whenever the Chinese man—dressed in his pantaloons, his queue trailing down his back all the way to his ankles—shuffled down the street, his pack slung over his back, a voice signal traveled from child to child to warn of his approach. Each child in turn ran and hid under a porch or behind walls until the Chinese man passed by, and the all clear rang out. Only then was everyone safe.

The dread of it all was in the contents of his sack. His purpose, we knew, was to grab children off the streets, stuff them in his sack, and then carry them back to his den where they met a fate too horrible to talk about.

Such mythology ended when my mother explained he carried laundry in his sack, at which time the myth was passed on to younger, more gullible children.

Eventually, these few streets of my local neighborhood, expanded into the city of Chicago which I found was a great place to live and learn about the diverse world I lived in. I finally understood that all people are my neighbors in a world that has since become smaller and smaller.

CHINESE-AMERICAN NEIGHBORS IN CHICAGO

Bea Tholen

One of the most exotic memories of my childhood in Chicago took place sometime in the late twenties or early thirties when each Sunday morning I traveled from the south side of the city where we lived in Englewood to Chinatown which was then and is now centered around 22nd Street and Wentworth Avenue. It may be stretching a point to say the Chinese there were "neighbors," but, in a larger sense, they were part of a network of "neighbors" throughout the city. I was fourteen years old at the time and in the company of "Mrs. Aitkin," who, though not related, lived with us and was like a grandmother. The reason for the Sunday excursions was that there had been a government regulation of some kind which would permit Chinese immigrants to apply for something of benefit to them. At the time I did not know the details and have not been able to learn them since. At any rate, there was a deadline involved and, in order to apply, the Chinese had to have a certain minimum knowledge of English.

Suddenly there was a crisis in the Chinese community and it turned out that there were many who needed to learn some rudimentary English in a hurry. An appeal was made through the churches and my "grandmother" Aitkin, a Quaker, was a member of one of them. Hence, our Sunday morning excursions for, as I recall, several weeks, or perhaps months.

As a young teenager, I had only a vague notion of how to teach, but materials were provided, and we did the best we could. Teaching was one-on-one, and Mrs. Aitkin and I were each assigned a student. We sat at tables in a church basement. My student was a young man in his early twenties, black haired, almond-eyed, and, to me who had never met a Chinese man before, exotic in the extreme. He was very shy and spoke no English. With the language barrier, we never got to know each other very well despite many Sundays of poring together over

an English language primer, in which I would place my finger under a word and pronounce it, and he would try to say it after me. Looking back, I've wondered how much he got out of it, and hoped it was helpful. It didn't aid in our endeavor that there was a limited amount of time for applying.

Those Sunday mornings are a cherished memory for me. It was my first introduction to Chinatown, to me a mysterious and fascinating place. To get off the streetcar and walk though the crowded streets past the red and green gateway on Wentworth Avenue was a great adventure. On each side of the streets, as we walked to the church, were restaurants, grocery stores, shops of all sorts, and red brick buildings which housed living quarters and businesses. From one of the buildings on a corner, there usually emanated the sound of a child crying. We learned later that it was a little girl whose feet were bound, the bandages being adjusted on Sunday mornings about the time we passed. I remember my horror when I heard this. We did occasionally see an old woman or two walking in a crippled way, whose feet had probably been bound in China.

In the restaurants, preparations were underway for the day's influx of customers. There seemed to be many older people on the streets, or maybe, to me at fourteen, they only seemed old. There was much use of red in the Chinese signs that were everywhere, but what I remember best was the general feeling of being in a strange and wonderful place.

In the '50s and '60s, as a claims representative working for the Social Security Administration, I took claims from Chinese-Americans applying for benefits and, as a result, became interested in the history of the Chinese in America. I learned that Chinese immigrants began arriving in Chicago about 1870, first settling around Van Buren and Clark Streets and then spreading south to around Cermac Road and Wentworth. Known as Chinatown, the area eventually became a tourist attraction and, for Chinese in the Midwest, a mecca.

The first influx of Chinese in the United States was in the 1850s when cheap labor was needed to build the transcontinental railroad system. It has been estimated that 9,000 of the 10,000 laborers who built the Union Pacific were Chinese. Immigration continued until 1869, when the Central Pacific met the Union Pacific at Ogden, Utah, at which time thousands of Chinese were thrown out of work. Many settled in California and New York, and some came to Chicago. In the mining camps of the west, laundry, tailoring, and cooking were considered to be "women's work," and, since there were no women to do these things, opportunities existed for thousands of unemployed Chinese.

The unskilled workers who came early on were mostly Cantonese. Later, Mandarin immigrants were usually merchants and businesspeople. Many of the descendants of these early, as well as later, Chinese became educated professionals of exceptional accomplishment. The work of Chinese-Americans in the sciences, arts, technology, literature, and other fields has enriched the lives of all Americans.

In my social security work in the Chicago area, I learned a little about the inner workings of the city's Chinatown. For example, I heard of the Chinese Benevolent Association and also of the "tongs," secret societies which helped the Chinese obtain proof of age for benefits and aided in other ways, too. I remember one heartbreaking case: an elderly man who never did establish his age because he thought the tong was charging him too much for its assistance and he wasn't going to pay it. Another was a Chinese man who had never become a citizen and was in the country illegally. He had worked for many years doing ironing in the back room of a Chinese laundry, where he also lived, emerging only at night when he wouldn't be detected. What a miserable life he had, living in fear all the while and spending his days, perhaps twelve hours each, in a steam-filled room doing endless ironing of shirts.

Before the adventure of teaching English in Chinatown, I had only a slight but remote knowledge of the Chinese in Chicago, as Mt. Auburn Cemetary, where my father was buried, had a section of Chinese graves. The inscriptions were in Chinese characters. I can remember as a little girl wandering among them and puzzling over the meanings.

Perhaps because of my Sunday excursions to Chinatown, I always retained a fondness for Chinese restaurants. After my family moved to the suburbs, my two close south-side school friends and I met regularly in "Nankin's," a Chinese restaurant in the Loop.

Living now in Jacksonville, Illinois, my husband and I have enjoyed friendships with two MacMurray College foreign students, one of whom lived with us for her last year of school. One is Chinese-Malaysian and the other Chinese-Thai. Both are married now, and we keep in touch. The children of one of them call us "Grandpa" and "Grandma."

While I may not have accomplished much in the way of helping my first Chinese student to learn English, he and the whole experiences of the Sunday morning excursions to our Chinese "neighbors" in Chicago did much for me. It acquainted me with Chinese-American culture and awakened a lifelong interest in the Chinese of Illinois.

WE LIVE AS NEIGHBORS

John J. Coyle

Once when camping at a state park, we visited with a woman from a small town in Illinois. Like all campers, she was extremely friendly and told us all about her family, town, and people. She used a term to describe the people who lived close to her: "We live neighbors to them." Very interesting! She was using the noun "neighbor" as an adverb—a colloquialism perhaps but it implies much more. It was a "we"–"they" reciprocal union that encompassed everything from the exchange of friendship to the borrowing of a cup of sugar.

It wasn't the borrowing of a cup of sugar that opened the concept of being neighbors with the people who lived across our street. We had just moved to our present home and had met several of the families on the block in a casual way. One evening when I returned from work, I started to mix a martini and found I was out of gin. I took a coffee cup and walked across the street and rang the bell. When Barbara opened the door, I asked if I could borrow a cup of gin. She laughed, agreed, and a neighbor was born.

At the time, both Barbara and my wife Ann were pregnant and due within a matter of days. Barbara's baby, a girl, was born first, and ours, also a girl, a few days later. Our baby was healthy. Barbara's child Alison was born with Down's Syndrome. When doctors encouraged Barbara and her husband Tim to put Alison in a home for exceptional children, they refused. Ann sided with Barbara and Tim, who raised Alison at home. That was over thirty-three years ago, and Alison has repaid their love in kind and wonderfully.

The concept of neighbors isn't limited to surrounding houses. We found neighbors at the Chicago Symphony at Orchestra Hall. For twelve years, we have had seats number three and four in the upper balcony, and seats number one and two were occupied by the same couple. Symphony people tend to be rather aloof, smiling, nodding, muttering, "Lovely evening, isn't it?" and, at the end of the concert saying, "Wasn't that stimulating?" As the years passed, we opened the season with, "Did you have a lovely summer?" and at the conclusion of the season, "We will see you next fall." So it went for four years. Then one evening a priest from the Sheil Center at Northwestern University was walking up the aisle and said, "Well, I see that the Coyles know the Brannigans." They were from Evanston

and went to the eleven o'clock Mass, while we went to the nine o'clock one. Later we exchanged notes. They had us living in Wayne, the fox-hunting area near the Fox River. We weren't quite as complimentary, placing them in Hinsdale. Ever since that ice breaker, we have met for cocktails and dinner before every concert.

One of the funnier spin offs of "living" neighbors was the red plastic flamingos, or, as my five-year-old granddaughter pronounced it, "flambingos." We had purchased two of these plastic birds standing on wire legs and placed them on our neighbor Sally's front lawn on the morning of her fiftieth birthday. That started a tradition. Birthdays, weddings, graduations, promotions, and homecomings were saluted by the flamingos being placed on either their front lawn or ours. I, being somewhat stuffy when humor is directed at me, have been quick to remove the flamingos if they are on my lawn. I am being butted by my own billy goat.

The neighborhood and the neighbors have changed, and that's as it should be. Younger people have moved in and baby carriages and three-wheel tricycles and two-wheelers with training wheels are on the sidewalk. Little children establish the friendships that cement a neighborhood. Barbara and Tim join my wife and me as the oldest families remaining on the block. The neighborhood still has vitality, but there is a difference. Because most of the husbands and wives work, they are seldom seen on the street. It used to be that the children played while the mothers watched and talked, encouraging friendship and camaraderie. Today, economics and fashion dictate two incomes. The older homes are being renovated and enlarged. Huge family rooms with sprawling decks and six-foot privacy fences have made the houses cocoons isolating the people from the outside—not exactly the places to go to borrow a cup of gin.

X Memories of Childhood and Youth

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

It is hard to say exactly why we remember what we do from our early years, but our memories are surely related to our sense of identity. We recall certain things from our childhood in order to know who we are, and to sustain a sense of self that allows us to face the challenges of the present. In a life marked by incredible changes, we all need to maintain some continuity with even the earliest versions of ourselves.

The memoirs in this section are all focused on adventures in a small world of close relationships and intense feelings, where larger forces often have a disturbing impact and lessons are sometimes learned the hard way. A good example is Wanda Gardner's "Caught on a Bridge," which sweeps us into the mind of a ten-year-old girl whose hopes for a big impression in the school play fade after a desperate encounter with a locomotive. She ends up with more to ponder than a career on the stage. Similarly, Floy K. Chapman depicts an unforgettable lesson about the power of nature in "The Storm of 1918."

Some of the most stressful childhood experiences involve running afoul of adults, who set the expectations that youngsters must measure up to—or suffer the consequences. Hugh McMenamin's "The Lesson" is a vivid account of school punishment back when teachers didn't spare the rod, and Joe Mangieri's seriocomic memoir, "My Career as a Bootlegger," closes with some thoughtful comments on the impact of a razor strapping.

Childhood observations of serious matters are featured in Wilbur Sauer's "Prayer Meeting" and Mildred Brooks' "Peace at Last." Despite his forced attendance at Wednesday night church services, young Wilbur does manage to see their enormous importance to the small group of people who come, and during a time of intense anxiety, young Mildred makes a touching bargain with God in an effort to save her brother. The Brooks memoir also features a poem carried in the author's mind for more than seventy years, which expresses the tragedy that came to so many families during World War I.

Four of the memoirs focus on the good times of childhood, at very different ages. Dorothy G. Thompson's "Going to Grandma's for Christmas" is a remarkably vivid account of the close family world of a five-year-old, while "The 4th of July in Millstadt" by Wilson N. Baltz and "When 'Kid' Gattis Fought in Bushnell" by Warren Wilson portray school-age youngsters within a community setting. The Wilson memoir is a fine story that has a plot worthy of a short, made-for-television film. And Russell Stump's account of "Howard and Me and the Model T" captures the wild fun and near tragedy of a fifteen-year-old boy and his "Whoopie Car."

Perhaps the most complex of these memoirs is Betty L. Hardwick's "World War II: The Home Front," which is a sensitive coming-of-age story that depicts a girl's growing awareness of the impact of war. As young Betty gets older and the war continues, her narrow personal focus gradually broadens to embrace her community and, at the close, her country. She finally realizes that life is a tough challenge that spares no one, but it can become enormously meaningful when people struggle together with a sense of common cause.

Taken together, these memoirs of childhood and adolescence remind us that the world of the young is a special place, filled with distinctive pleasures, threats, hopes, and adventures. And profoundly meaningful things can happen there.

John E. Hallwas

CAUGHT ON THE BRIDGE

Wanda Gardner

Life had a lovely hue for me that early summer day almost 66 years ago. It was the second day of June and I was on my way to practice for the Children's Day program at church. I had a part—six whole lines to speak. My Sunday School teacher had given me a slip of paper on the Sunday before, asking if I would come for practice the next Tuesday afternoon, and this was that day! Wild horses could not have kept me away.

I had a part; I, Wanda Kirby, was going to get up on the big stage at church the next Sunday and, before God and everybody, say my six lines, hold up my flowers, and bow. Then I would sing "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" with the other children. I debated on whether I would be told to bow or curtsey or merely walk off. I mulled it over in my mind. I thought, "There will be people there who will say, 'That child has a lovely voice; she should take up acting. She would go far.' Maybe I would take up acting. When they all gathered around me after the program and told me how well I did my part and sang, I would thank them graciously. When I became a famous actress, I would say I got my start appearing in Sunday School plays and that the audience had encouraged me. Then they could boast, 'We knew her then, and we knew she was going far.'"

I was doubly blessed that summer day because I had, of all good things, a new pair of slippers—black patent leather with big, brass buckles and a slightly cuban heel—my very first pair of "high heels." Also, I had on rayon hose. For a ten-year-old, life could hold no lovelier gifts. The shoes I had kept wrapped in tissue paper, taking them out two or three times a day to rub Vaseline into the leather so they would not crack. The hose I'd kept wrapped in tissue also, tucked into the toe of my new shoes.

The morning had dragged to dinner time. I ate but was too excited to eat much, took a long bath, then put on a pink and white checked dress and my new footwear. Rayon has a sheen and could break into runners easily, but I had carefully pulled them on, adjusted my garters, then stepped into the new pumps. I had deliberated wearing my old ones until I got to the church, but decided not to; the town girls had a habit of making fun of us from the country, and if they had seen me with a paper bag holding my slippers, they would have teased me. I carried a small, white purse. In it I had a comb, a handkerchief, the folded and creased slip of paper with my piece, and a whole nickel for a treat—maybe a bottle of strawberry pop, a pack of grape gum, or two sticks of gum and three jawbreakers.

Church was in Kenney, Illinois—the Christian Church. Kenney was (I know now) a very small town four miles from our home if we went around the road, but three miles if we walked the railroad track. I debated whether to go by the road or the track. My mother said, "I do not know for sure what time the next train is due, so you had better go by the road." We always had to worry about getting caught on the trestle over Salt Creek, and in all of my ten years, I had never walked that trestle alone. I was always in the company of my father, older sisters, or brothers. They knew the timetable of the trains and, also, by peering up and around the grade, they could see the signal. The signal had a long arm which swung up and down. When the arm was down, it meant there was a train in the "block," and you had better wait until it had passed before getting on the trestle. I did not think about the fact that the trees were in full leaf and that I would be unable to see if the arm was up or down. I tried to see, but I couldn't. I listened and could not hear a train, so I started across. There were one-hundred and forty ties from one end to the other. (I knew because I had counted them when walking the trestle before, being sure not to step between the ties.) One could see the creek running way down below, and if you looked too long, you would get dizzy—especially if the water was high and it was dirty, swirling, and frightening. This day it was high and in an ugly mood; the spring rains had put it out of its banks.

I tried not looking down and, instead, thinking about something else. I even recited my lines out loud, testing to hear if I had the right emphasis on each word.

I was about ninety ties onto that trestle when my ears picked up the sound of an approaching train, coming full-speed behind me. It was the Green Diamond Special, a fast passenger train. When I looked back, I saw that train bearing down on me, blowing its whistle. I started running, but my new shoes were slick on the bottom, and I kept sliding them between the ties. I thought, "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam; I don't want to be chopped up by a train."

Some instinct of self-preservation told me to get out to the side; I knew that I was not going to beat the train. I threw myself down; rolled to the end of the ties; and hung suspended over Salt Creek, with its dirty, angry, swirling water, as the train roared by. I was near enough to almost touch the big, black wheels turning as they passed by me, with the pistons pumping. It seemed that I was practically under them and that any minute they would suck me to oblivion. I smelled the creosote in the ties and felt the sharp edges digging into my ribs. After what seemed like an eternity, the train was gone—clickity-clacking down the track. I pulled myself up and walked to the end of the trestle, where I inspected myself. I had ruined my hose, skinning my shin from knee to ankle. Dusting myself off, I looked at my hands: tar and cinders were ground into them. But I combed my hair and straightened my clothes as best I could and continued on to practice. If Jesus wanted me for a sunbeam, then I was not going to let Him down.

I told no one of my escape; to this day, I think I was more concerned that I had ruined my hose than anything else. I had to get up on the stage with big runners in my hose, with blood dried on my knees, and speak my six lines, and then sing with the rest of the children, "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam." I walked home by the road, saying nothing to my family when I got there, cleaning myself as best I could, and hiding my torn hose. I hated to upset my parents and thought my family would think I was dumb for getting caught on the bridge. The next day, some of the trainmen checked through the neighborhood, asking if the neighbors knew who the little girl was who had been on the trestle and if she was injured, so the story got out and I had to tell.

I have thought of this a good many times. I can imagine that poor conductor and fireman watching me running and falling ahead of their train. I can imagine that they closed their eyes and turned their heads, saying, "Oh My God in Heaven," or some such phrase. I do not know if they did, but I hope they saw that I had gotten across safely and did not have to finish the "run" thinking they had chopped up a little girl in a pink and white checked dress.

I went on to speak in other places and sing other songs, and I have tried to be a sunbeam. However, I never became an actress, I never sang well, and other than a dim glimmer, I never made too much light in the world.

I have wondered why I was not killed that day, and what instinct told me what to do to survive. To this day, although I am 76 years old, I never see a train but I remember those big wheels; and if I smell creosote, like there was on those railroad ties, I get goose bumps, and shivers run up my spine.

THE STORM OF 1918

Floy K. Chapman

It was the morning of January 11, 1918. My brother and I were on our way to high school in a buggy, pulled by a faithful old horse.

It had been a mild winter. The roads were muddy and slow, but the air was balmy. There was a vague uneasiness in

the air, and the sky was black with fast-flying wild ducks and geese.

"Look at those birds," my brother remarked. "They worry me. They fly as if for their lives." Looking back, I suppose they were.

We got to school and left the horse in the livery stable, as usual. There was still the uneasy feeling we could not explain.

At 1 o'clock, the school superintendent called an assembly and told us he had received word of a bad Arctic storm moving into the area. He had already called the livery stable and told them to get our horses ready for the trip home. "Go at once," he said. "Do not stop for anything."

Sensing the worry in his voice, we left quickly and found that a very cold wind was already coming from the north. Although we had warm clothing, a hot soapstone at our feet, and a bearskin laprobe, the cold was becoming worse by the minute. The two miles east were terribly disagreeable, but when we turned north, it was well-nigh unbearable. The horse tried to turn from facing the bitter wind, and my brother had to use the whip many times to keep the horse headed homeward.

When we finally drove into a covered driveway between our two big corn cribs, the poor horse was exhausted. A hired man met us and took the horse to the barn.

"Thank God you are home," he said. "We were afraid you would not make it. I never saw anything like this."

The storm lasted for three days. Snow fell all day on Saturday, January 12, and Sunday, January 13. It was a general storm throughout the Midwest. The fine snow drifted like a desert sandstorm. North and south roads filled to a depth of ten feet, and everyone was completely blocked in. Temperatures in Carrollton on January 13 ranged from 20 to 26 degrees below zero. The storm gradually abated Sunday night and Monday.

Carrollton was without trains and newspapers for three days. We stayed home and fed the fire continually. We shut off all the rooms we could and slept close to the fire. The men struggled in an effort to keep the livestock fed and as warm as possible. Even so, some pigs and chickens froze. All the next summer, we found wild animals that had perished. Many trees died, too.

The schoolchildren had all arrived home safely, although the ones who rode horseback had it even harder than we did. One boy, although protected by horse blankets and warm clothing, nearly froze to death.

Even the coal dealers had failed to lay in enough stock to handle the great demand for fuel. Some people were so desperate, they started out with handcarts in search of something to burn.

The city authorities confiscated a car of coal headed for Kansas City that had been sidetracked by mistake at the depot. The precious fuel was doled out in small quantities to needy families.

In late February, the men in the community were finally able to dig out the snowbound train east of Carrollton.

There have been other storms since then, but the people were better prepared. From this one bad blizzard, they learned to prepare for the worst.

And I developed a new sense of respect for the impact nature could have on people's lives.

THE LESSON

Hugh McMenamin

We drove past what used to be Brush Point School in DeKalb County after a wedding last week. It brought back memories of fifty years ago. The one-room school was on the single acre my grandfather sold to the budding school district so

many years ago. It had been converted to a dwelling and modernized. But like an aging harridan, all the layers of paint and facelifts could never alter the lady.

The ghost of Pa Munson returned. It's funny but, of all my teachers, I remember him the most vividly. The most learned professors in the college and medical school pale in comparison. He taught more than education. He taught discipline and responsibility. He taught life.

I recall one episode in particular. It had been a cold, late fall day on which this third-grade boy left the warm farm kitchen with the admonition of my mother to take an apple from the orchard on my way to school. Of course, I had to find the largest of the Mackintoshes. It was easily the size of two fists together. It would be sweet and juicy at noon.

As the day began, I sat at my desk in front of Imogene Wilkinson. Although I didn't know it at the time, I think she was sweet on me. Of course, I hated her. She was bigger than me and I was sure she wasn't very pretty. She always wore her long red hair in a braid. She teased me unmercifully. The rest of the kids always taunted me about her being my girlfriend, which I frequently and profusely denied. Why, she would walk a mile out of her way to tell my mother what I did wrong in school.

It was not a good day for Pa Munson. He was a tall, corpulent man with gout and a switch. A willow switch, freshly cut and very limber. Only after I developed gout myself could I appreciate the misery he was going through that day. There were no sick days in a one-room country school in the middle of the Depression.

As a teacher he taught us to help each other while he supervised from his desk. There would be a normal buzz of industry while we were working at the studies. In fact, visitors would be amazed at the level of noise and learning in a single classroom of twenty-five kids divided into the eight grades. It was an unwritten rule among us that you knew your lessons well because you might be embarrassed if a lower grade student knew your lesson better than you. The shame would have been intolerable.

The morning passed uneventfully, with Mr. Munson sitting at the desk in the front of the room with his right foot elevated and the straight-backed chair at the side of his desk reserved for any miscreant deserving public humiliation. Reading, recess, and arithmetic passed. At lunch, the usual swappings of delights were attempted, and our jealousies of the lunches packed by the other mothers were suppressed. My own lunch was more than ample without the great Mackintosh, so the apple was secreted in the chaos of my desk along with books and returned papers stored for an uncaring posterity.

It was just before the afternoon recess when I got hungry again. I surreptitiously slipped the apple from the desk and glanced back at Imogene. She laughed at me a little. Defiantly, I took a small bite.

The wrath exploded.

Although he had hardly moved throughout the morning, this gigantic teacher was standing in the small aisle by my desk glowering at me. I cringed as I noticed his purple face.

"What ARE you doing?"

I had no answer. I had no voice.

"Come up here!"

I set the apple on the desk and started forward.

"Bring that apple!"

I glanced at the others in the room. Terror was apparent on all their faces.

"Turn around!"

I turned and pressed my buttocks against the desk. At least he wouldn't hit my legs with the switch. I saw Imogene's face. She was laughing at me.

"Eat!" he demanded.

I took a small bite.

Whaap! The switch bounced off the desk and hit my backside.

"Eat more!"

I took a bigger bite.

Whaap again! I remember being grateful for the cold day. I was wearing corduroy pants under the big overalls that were a *de facto* uniform for farm kids in the Depression. The switch would bound off the table and hit on the leather belt of the corduroys.

"Again!"

I took a bigger bite. Why had I picked such a big apple?

Whaap!

It really didn't hurt, but that damned Imogene was still laughing. And she would probably follow me home to tell Mom.

"DON'T STOP NOW!!"

I never knew I could get so much apple in my mouth. I choked and sputtered.

Whaap!

With another bite, I had consumed about half of the monstrous apple. I continued to press against the desk for protection. The whole room was looking at me. I braced for the next flight of the switch.

"Now, go sit down, and don't show off again!"

I don't remember setting the apple on his desk. I knew I was white and I could feel my legs shaking. What was worse, I knew I had been punished justly. Today, there would be allegations of child abuse and brutality. But I wasn't injured.

I found my desk and sat.

When Pa Munson dismissed us for afternoon recess, I remained sitting. He looked at me and motioned me forward. As I came, he took the remaining half of the damned apple and threw it in the wastebasket.

I stood before him. Then he opened his arms. I reached for him and he held me.

I cried.

MY CAREER AS A BOOTLEGGER

Joe Mangieri

In late September my dad, Angelo, would announce to my mother and everyone else that come this weekend no one was to make plans other than to assist in the harvesting of the blue grapes that were now ripe and ready. This annual announcement carried such a ring of authority that it went without saying that on Saturday morning all hands were available and ready to pick grapes.

Over the years at 309 East Martin in Abingdon, Dad had continued to enlarge his grape arbor to what became a mini vineyard. He had planted, cultivated, and pruned his vines so that total production translated to four barrels of wine and ten or twelve pints of jelly. Each barrel measured 60 gallons. Not bad.

In those days, all of the Italians had substantial grape arbors, and all claimed to make high-quality wine. Among his peers, Dad had the reputation of making a superb quality wine. He used to say that the others could have had a high-quality wine, too, if they would only invest in more sugar. He said that sugar was what determined good wine. Acquiring a high alcoholic content was not difficult, but in order to arrive at a wine with a clear, clean, and resonant taste, there had to be an articulate use of sugar. He said that it wasn't necessary to drink wine to determine the quality. Sniffing the wine was adequate. If the aroma did not suggest conversation and good fellowship, it failed to pass the test of good wine.

I'm sure Dad had some failures. However, I'm not aware of any time when he threw the stuff out. I can recall times when things did not go right and the anticipated wine did not develop, but in its place a kind of vinegar-like tasting product would emerge. Then Mom would get busy and try to use it up in cooking—preparing salads and stuff. Wow, what an assignment. In retrospect, we kids had to be experiencing a kind of

perpetual "high." Vinegar or whatever, there had to be some alcoholic content in there.

As we grew older and the need for money emerged, it followed that siphoning a fruit jar of wine off the top of the barrel and then selling it for 20¢ or 25¢ was a nifty way to keep in spending money. In my case, I had an outlet who was totally reliable. His name was "Tulip" Harris. Tulip was a barber and he operated out of that part of the old Pool Hall which was set aside for that purpose. Tulip liked sports and sporting events. He also liked all kinds of alcoholic beverages—especially "Dago Red" wine. It was inevitable that he was to become my best customer.

You see, as we were growing up, Dad cut our hair. It normally was an acceptable haircut, but when you reach age fourteen and start looking at girls and they start looking back, you begin to wonder if the recent haircut is as good as it used to be. Making the decision to siphon off a jar of wine and then trading it to Tulip for an uptown haircut was the way to go.

At fourteen I was the youngest bootlegger in town.

I had another outlet who was also reliable. His name was John Davis. John had a contact who preferred to remain anonymous. Periodically Mr. Mystery Man would order a jar of wine from John. He, in turn, would notify me, and in due time I would procure and deliver a jar of wine for 20¢. John delivered for 40¢ and everyone was happy.

To this day I have not been able to determine who the mystery man was.

The wine stealing continued for some time, and then one night my dad made an announcement to my mother. "Rosa," he said, "Tomorrow I will tap my best barrel of wine." And then he did a kind of soft-shoe dance in anticipated joy.

The time of year was mid-February and the aging in wood process was nearly complete. Upon going to bed that night I found it impossible to fall asleep. My mind kept reviewing how many jars of wine I had stolen and were they enough that he would notice. What I failed to calculate was that I had four other brothers who were servicing their preferred customers from the same barrel. The most notorious of them was brother Nunzi. His most valued customer was a guy named Jim "Peg" Long, a prime consumer. Incidentally, when Peg died at age 94, people were to say that booze killed him.

Anyway, Dad made the tap like he said, and all he got was a tiny trickle and then nothing. Horror of horrors, the barrel was dry.

In my Dad's house, the democratic process did not prevail. He quickly concluded that his five sons had stolen a barrel of wine, and he immediately prepared himself to administer the necessary corrective measures.

Mom later told me that as soon as he fetched the razor strap he took a position on a chair next to the back door with the strap across his lap and waited for us to come home from school. She said it was the longest afternoon of her married life. She told me that every ten minutes he would ask, "What time is it?"

Very precisely and very methodically each strapping was efficiently delivered. I entered through the back door to be confronted by a grim figure who looked seven feet tall, who asked in a strange voice, "You steal my wine?" I nodded in the affirmative and took the licks, after which I sulked off to another part of the house to brood and contemplate.

Of course the best performance came about when brother Nunzi arrived wearing what was called a sheep-lined coat. (It had lots of wool padding.) Dad knew where to deliver the strap to get the loudest noise—right across the back. The timing was excellent, especially when you consider that nothing was rehearsed. Dad swung, and Nunzi let out a howl of feigned pain. In fact, father and son were doing so well that Mom couldn't contain herself any longer, and she came running out, screaming, "Angelo, stop, stop you are killing him." Of course, by now Dad was on a roll, and his response was, "That's exactly what I intend to do," and kept right on flailing away. Meanwhile,

brother Nunzi was keeping his face covered so as not to reveal his laughter.

In this episode, three things were accomplished.

First, Angelo reaffirmed his role as head of the household by taking charge and meeting a family problem head on.

Second, the accumulation of guilt was quickly exorcised with the above-mentioned corrective measures, thereby allowing the natural healing process to function.

Third, the stealing of wine came to an abrupt halt. My career as a bootlegger was over.

PRAYER MEETING

Wilber Sauer

Until recent years, Wednesday night in many small towns was reserved for church meetings. School boards, lodges, and other groups did not have gatherings scheduled then as that was the time for choir practice and an evening when the most faithful could be found at prayer meetings.

Many ministers did not consider the midweek service to be the high point of the church week. Some preachers even viewed the event as a "thorn in the flesh," to be borne as part of the calling. At times they were candid in their comments. As one pastor wrote in an 1890 report, "Try as I might, I do not seem to be able to generate much interest in the Wednesday night prayer meeting." Usually there was little formal preparation by the pastor, and those who came seemed to be satisfied with the same format week after week. Often their presence seemed to be a part of a web of comfortable routine.

My first exposure to prayer meetings occurred in a small central Illinois town in the mid-1920s. My father was minister of the Methodist Church, which espoused the prayer meeting as an important part of the legacy of John Wesley.

My attendance was not entirely voluntary, but, rather, a method of allowing my mother the luxury of one less child for an hour. Being the oldest, I was appointed to be a regular communicant.

As the parsonage was two blocks from the church, my father and I would set out a few minutes before seven to open the church door, ring the bell, and turn on the lights. In the meeting room, the four bare lightbulbs, which hung by twisted green wires from the ceiling, threw harsh shadows on the drab walls. The old and thin carpet in the middle of the floor bore only the memory of color and pattern. A dozen or so very common wooden chairs stood before a small table. The piano, its veneer darkened and crazed, presented an uneven row of ivory keys, all showing evidence of the many fingers that had coaxed sound from the patient and forgiving instrument. My first job of the evening was to place a frayed copy of the paperbacked *Sunday School Hymns* on each chair.

By 7:20, five to ten people had arrived. The bell was rung again at 7:30, and a verse of a hymn on the piano suggested that the meeting was about to begin. The pianist, a very large and serious lady, was handicapped by a limited repertoire and the odd habit of playing the bass part of a chord a fraction of a second before the treble was struck. The result was an echo effect, unnerving to the sensitive listener.

Because of the limitations of the pianist and the singers, we sang a rotation of hymns which included "In the Garden," "The Old Rugged Cross," and other well-known songs that had stood the test of time and untrained voices. My brother, who did not attend prayer meetings, had heard a variation of the first verse of "The Old Rugged Cross" which changed the words to read, "On a hill far away stood an old Chevrolet, but the Ford is still running today." This version lessened the spirit of the hymn for me.

Other thoughts that crossed my mind during the singing often centered on the piano stool. How could three small wooden legs support such a large pianist? Thoughts about this engineering wonder and the possible consequences of a collapse could take up several verses of "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning."

Other thoughts flickered through the songs, too. Why did Simon wear two pairs of glasses to see the hymnal, which he held at the tip of his nose? And why did my father, who had a loud voice, sing a few bars of the bass notes, then suddenly shift to the melody line? Just listening to the singing was an auditory adventure for a young boy, as most of the people mumbled the words, unaware of notation or key. However poor it may have been, the singing was an effort that reflected the commitment of those who attended.

After the opening hymn, there was time for "sentence" prayers. There was a reason for stressing brevity because there were those present who could, and would, take advantage of a public forum and continue to pray until there was a noticeable lack of interest on the part of the listeners. The prayers were usually serious and heartfelt statements of thanks and intercession.

After the prayers were finished, there was a time for testimonies. My favorite participant in this part of the service was a man with the wonderful name of John Silvernail. Mr. Silvernail was a short, square man with hands that were rough, and with a face that was wind-torn and creased from years of railroad work. The muscles of his arms seemed ready to split his well-worn suit coat. For years John Silvernail had been a drunkard, but a religious experience had changed his life, and he never tired of telling how his family had suffered and of the sorrow he felt for his misdeeds. His simple and elegant statement varied little from week to week, but the sight of that squat, rough man standing with his huge hands grasping the back of a simple wooden chair in that gray and somber room had a lasting effect on all who cared to listen. There were those who never spoke, but seemed to take succor and encouragement from the words of others. Compressed into the testimonies of that small group were expressions of grief, despair, lost opportunity, and acceptance of life's unfairness, but there were also words of encouragement and hope and final victory. Even for a young boy, the spoken words and heartfelt examples had meaning.

After the testimonies, my father would ask those present to recite a favorite Bible verse. I alternated between the only two I knew, "God is love" and "Jesus wept." Others displayed their ability to memorize long passages, and this was done with pride and feeling. After the recitation, my father would spend a few minutes on some particular passage, and then the meeting would always end with his favorite hymn, "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

A few minutes for visiting followed, but the faithful, again blessed and renewed, soon left. While there was no system for arrival, there was a definite order of departure. Mr. and Mrs. Eli were the first to leave. They drove a Buick Light Six—the only one in the congregation. Mr. Allison was next; then the pianist whose husband had been homebound for years. Together, and the last to go, were John Silvernail and Simon. Mr. Silvernail led Simon all the way to Mrs. Webb's house where he roomed. At night he was nearly blind, and without help his contact with other people was severely limited. John Silvernail's nearly square body and his rolling gait contrasted with Simon's very tall, thin build and hesitant steps, as the two figures quickly faded in the nearly darkened street.

Then my father and I would collect the songbooks and straighten the chairs, and at the door I would reach high to turn the old rotary switch, leaving the quiet building in soft darkness. We would close the outside door, walk down the steps, and turn toward home. Prayer meeting was over for another week.

PEACE AT LAST

Mildred Brooks

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Not too many can remember now what happened on November 11, 1918, the day that World War I ended, which was celebrated for many years as Armistice Day.

I was just ten years old then, but I remember that day as if it were yesterday. All the bells in town were ringing, and everyone was hugging everyone else and dancing around.

That night, there were many bonfires. Our hometown band came to the house of every family that had a son, a brother, or a father overseas. In the chilly darkness they played "Keep the Home Fires Burning," and everyone was happy.

When they came to our home, my father, mother, sister, and I went to the door. Although we appreciated their reason for celebrating, my mother told them why we couldn't share their joy. We had just received a letter from the War Department saying that my brother was "missing in action, somewhere in the Argonne Forest." That's all it said, except that "if he was found," they would notify us.

My mother knelt right there, and we all joined her, praying that he would be found alive and returned to us. It was a very stressful time for us all.

When I had the time to reflect on it, I thought that if I would join our church, which I had not yet made an effort to do, my brother would be found. So, the next evening I went to our minister's home and knocked on his back door. He asked what I wanted, so I told him: "I want to join the church, so God will find my brother."

The next Sunday I was baptized.

We waited many months, hearing nothing, and then we finally received another letter from the War Department. It said that my brother had been found. He was not dead, but he had been wounded and gassed and was in a hospital somewhere in France. The letter did not say exactly where he was.

Thrilled and full of hope, we waited many more months. Then, one day in 1919, my brother finally came home. I was so excited to see him—and so grateful. For my family, the war was finally over.

I helped him to unload his big, old, worn-out knapsack, and after he had gotten settled, he handed me a rumpled piece of paper that he had treasured for many months, and he said, "My buddy from Chicago wrote this poem for me. He was killed the next day."

I read it, and I loved that poem so much that I memorized it. To this day, more than seventy years later, I remember every word of it. It is a poem that expresses the tragedy that came to so many families—and almost came to mine:

Peace at Last

There is peace, tonight, in the Verdun Hills,
But, oh God, what a terrible toll!
It isn't the war but the aftermath
That burns and sears the soul.

I joined with Jim; I drilled with Tom;
I carried a pack with Joe.
We were buddies when we left the "States";
It seems like a week ago.

I stood with them, in the front line trench,
Just before the "Verdun Drive."
We laughed and joked in confidence
That we'd all come out alive.

Then over the top, in the first mad rush,
Through gas and wire and din;

A "75" got Tom and Joe,
And a sniper's shell got Jim.

I saw them fall but that was all,
Then on with the charging wave,
On into the wilds of the Argonne
While they rest in their shell-hole graves.

We'll soon return to the "States" again,
But without Tom, Joe, and Jim.
When we meet the mothers of the ones who died,
How will we answer them?

Will it ease the pain in their mothers' hearts
To point to the east and say,
"They rest over there in the hills of France;
They died for the U.S.A."?

GOING TO GRANDMA'S FOR CHRISTMAS

Dorothy G. Thompson

A Christmas I remember was when I was five. My world consisted primarily of my family then, and we did so much together. My mother had long dark hair that she braided and pinned up in a roll at the back of her head, and she had brown eyes and a sweet smile. I thought she was the prettiest mother ever.

My father was tall and slim, with black curly hair and grey eyes with long lashes. He was a very gentle and honest man. He told us to never steal or lie, and then people would respect and trust us, even if we were poor.

My older sister Esther was seven and in school. I thought she was very smart to be able to read. She was in a Christmas play, and I was so proud when she got up and said,

Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat;
Please put a penny in the old man's hat.
If you don't have a penny, a half cent will do.
If you don't have a half cent, "God Bless You."

My younger sister Frances looked like a doll with her black hair, blue eyes, and sunny smile. She was just three years old.

We were very happy in the big old farm house we lived in, seven miles south of Virginia, Illinois. It was almost Christmas; we were all so excited we were going to Grandma Lane's, my mother's family. They lived eight miles north of Virginia.

When I saw some birds fly up on the window sill, I said, "Mama, why is that bird watching me?" She said, "That is one of Santa's helpers. It is watching to see if you are good; then he tells Santa." So after that, every time a bird flew on the window sill, I'd say, "Mama, do you want me to help with the dishes, or dust the furniture," and then I would look back over my shoulder to see if the bird was listening.

Mama had us children bring in some bricks before Christmas. I said, "What do you want them for?" and she replied, "I will put them in the bottom of the oven in the morning, while I bake biscuits for breakfast. They will get hot and we will wrap old rugs around them to keep your feet warm when we go to Grandma and Grandpa's tomorrow for Christmas Eve."

It was a very cold Christmas Eve. When Daddy hitched up Bess and Bob, our big black team, to the green farm wagon, he put some sleigh bells on the harness so they would jingle as we drove down the road. He then placed loose straw in the

bottom of the wagon for us to sit on. He put in the hot bricks for us to put our feet on and Mama wrapped us up in heavy comforters to keep us warm on our long journey.

Despite his efforts, we were getting pretty cold by the time we got to Grandma's house. She met us at the door with a big hug and kiss, and Grandpa helped us off with our coats, mittens, and caps. Then Grandma gave us some hot chocolate and hot gingerbread men. We soon felt warm again. Grandma said, "As soon as you get warmed up, you can help with decorating the sugar cookies." Of course, we children thought Grandma couldn't decorate the cookies without our help.

After a big supper, Grandpa, with a twinkle in his eyes, said, "I don't suppose you children would care to help put up the Christmas tree?" We almost knocked over the table getting up so fast.

The tree was set up in the dining room. We all helped string cranberries and popcorn, and cut stars out of the silver paper from cigarette packages. Then Mom's brothers, Uncle Morrie and Uncle Rudy, clipped the candle holders on the tree, and put the candles in them. When they lit all the candles, we just knew it was the most beautiful tree in the whole world.

Grandma always baked raisin bread on Christmas Eve, and I always wondered why it took so long for it to bake. I was afraid that if Santa saw her up he wouldn't stop and leave any toys for us.

We always put out cookies and a glass of milk for Santa. That year we put out some hay for the reindeer, too, and the next morning we had a note from Santa. He thanked us for being so thoughtful. He said he was hungry and tired and so were his reindeer, and he appreciated us thinking of him. We were thrilled to get a personal letter from Santa; that was really something to brag about. I was a big girl before I found out who wrote the letter. It was Grandpa. We had never seen his writing, so that was why he wrote it.

We awoke about four o'clock Christmas morning. Mom and Dad slept in the bed upstairs, and we children slept on the floor. If one of us woke up, we would wake up the other two, and downstairs we would run to see what Santa had brought us.

Oh! It was so exciting to see all the wonderful things we got. A beautiful doll that went to sleep when you laid her down, a new dress and a string of beads, my own hairbrush, and lots of candy. We would grab a handful of candy and run back upstairs to bed, and then we would talk about all the things Santa had brought us, and giggle about how surprised Mom and Dad would be at all the things we got. As soon as they woke up, we would all three jump in bed with them and tell them how good Santa had been. Mom and Dad would say, "You must have been very good for Santa to bring you so much."

Then we all went downstairs together and looked again at what Santa had brought us. We always found so many things we had missed when we came down the first time.

Then there were our stockings hanging on the mantle, which had gifts from Grandma and Grandpa. We would get oranges, apples, and nuts, which we only got at Christmas time. They always tasted so much sweeter because we just got them once a year. We were so excited that we couldn't eat breakfast, but we could always eat cookies on the run.

Then we watched Grandma and Mom stuff a goose and some ducks they were baking for dinner and make homemade mince meat and pumpkin pies. There was never anything that smelled as good as Grandma's kitchen at Christmas time.

After dinner they would light up the Christmas tree again. Uncle Morrie would take down his fiddle, Uncle Rudy would play the piano, and Grandma would play the French Harp. She also would teach us the Irish jig. We would dance and sing; it was really a great time.

All too soon Daddy would say, "It's a long drive home. If we expect to get home before dark we had better be getting ready to go." The horses were rested and ready to trot going

home. It was so cold you could see their breath like they were blowing out smoke.

We huddled down in our comforters, saying it was the best Christmas we had ever had. We dozed off to sleep, so Daddy had to carry us in the house when we got home.

He built a big fire in the heating stove to get us all warm and cozy again, and then we kissed Mom and Daddy good night and said our prayers, and snuggled down in our warm bed, still talking about our Christmas presents and the good time we had at Grandma's.

THE FOURTH OF JULY IN MILLSTADT

Wilson M. Baltz

The 4th of July holiday in Millstadt, St. Clair County, used to be, literally, a bang-up time. Youngsters and the not-so-young voiced "Happy Birthday, America" in noisy, unrestrained ways.

Today, throughout the nation, the 4th is quiet, more subdued, not much different than other July days. There is little personal expression in proclaiming our nation's most important and meaningful holiday. Celebrations are the *en masse*, family-economy-size-package kind, but things used to be different.

Back in Millstadt, on one memorable 4th of July, I rose early, wanting to live as much of the day as possible. Mother sent me on an errand to the Home Bakery for breakfast pastries. The time was six o'clock; the village, sleepy-eyed, was beginning to stir from its slumber. The morning air was cool and crisp, before the July sun would warm it. Padding barefooted along the town's sidewalks I became aware of music seemingly coming from Heaven! This couldn't be, I reasoned. It turned out that the sound came from the roof of the brewery building on West Oak Street, where the Enterprise Band was serenading the townspeople with patriotic and martial tunes. "The Stars and Stripes Forever," "America, The Beautiful," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and others have never sounded better than on that early morning, many years ago. It was a most inspiring and glorious July 4th morning!

Extra money was scarce in those years, but most youngsters had the initiative to earn money for firecrackers, sparklers, caps, and novelties of the day. Weeks before the 4th, strawberries were picked, lawns mowed, garages tidied, chicken coops cleaned and whitewashed, garden weeds pulled, and other menial tasks cheerfully done with the promise of money for the 4th.

One novelty was in the form of a small croquet mallet. The top half of the head would be separated from the bottom half, explosive caps inserted, and the head re-assembled. To activate it, the mallet was slammed on the sidewalk, and the force of the exploding caps would send the top half skyward. Naturally, I increased the powder charge each time to send the projectile higher and higher. "Just how high can I send it?" I asked myself. I loaded the mallet head with an extra-heavy charge, knelt on the sidewalk for better leverage, raised the mallet over my head, gathered my strength, and pounded it on the sidewalk. A deafening explosion of orange flame and acrid smoke boomed the projectile into the air. I never saw it again. When Voyager II, billions and billions of miles into intergalactic flight, relays to Earth photos of a red and yellow-plumed object zipping along, I can tell the astounded NASA scientists that it was launched by a ten-year-old boy at the intersection of East Washington and North Mulberry Streets in Millstadt on July 4, 1928.

Sporadic explosions of firecrackers would be heard a few days before the 4th. Some people simply had to scratch their "itch" for fireworks. The banging increased day by day until by

the time the big day arrived, there was an incessant banging, popping, and booming.

Very small firecrackers, called "lady fingers," were fired individually or in strands of 100 or more. They were rather harmless, but caution was exercised, nevertheless.

Medium-sized firecrackers would send an empty bean can a-flying into the air. Carefully placed in rotten tomatoes, firecrackers would also send juice and pulp over a wide area. More fun! A trick worth mentioning was to load a homemade slingshot with a 'cracker and stretch the elastic to the limit; then another would light the fuse, yell "Now," and release the slingshot to send the "bomb" over the rooftops.

Exploding firecrackers under piles of powdery dust created the likeness of artillery shells exploding in Flanders as seen in silent World War I movies at ice cream socials in the churchyard. Little did we know that within twenty years we would be in a greater war.

"Torpedoes" were popular with boys with strong throwing arms. The hollow papier maché balls, the size of hulled walnuts, when thrown against a brick wall, exploded with a loud report. No doubt, they contained fulminate of mercury, the active substance in shell primers. Also, "Sons of Guns," dark red wafers, nickel-size, would spit fire, crackle, and emit smoke when ground under a leather heel. All kinds of cap guns were universally popular with small celebrants. Exciting shoot-outs between "cops" and "robbers" were staged in and around outbuildings. "Injuns" and "cowboys" stalked each other in corn and bean plots in the back gardens.

Uptown, the big boys rocked the village with booming "cannon crackers." No lady fingers for them. No sir!

An older brother and a cousin made a lot of racket blowing the lid off a molasses can with acetylene gas and a flame. No British Redcoats were routed, but our dog, "Trix," cowered in his house all day, thinking his last day had come.

Our arsenal was a newsstand/confectionery at what is now 13 West Washington Street. The shopkeepers displayed the huge inventory openly on tables and in boxes, apparently unmindful of the danger. Had a flame been dropped accidentally, Millstadt would have had a real big bang, never to be forgotten.

It seemed that every yard, every house, displayed the Stars and Stripes on the 4th. Automobiles sported flags in sets of 2, 3, 4, and 5 on the radiator caps. That was the time when radiator caps were not under the hood. The young decorated their bikes with flags, bunting, and streamers. It was a time to celebrate and have fun.

Lawn parties were in vogue. Ice cream, strawberries, and soft drinks were served and, after dark, fireworks were the big attraction. I liked the big sky rockets which whoooooshed from their launching pads, arcing high, to leave a trail of red and to die at their zenith with a soft bang, amid a shower of multicolored sparkles.

Fourth of July celebrations as we experienced them in the Millstadt years are gone forever. But, thank goodness we have the memories.

WHEN "KID" GATTIS FOUGHT IN BUSHNELL

Warren Wilson

Vagrants found walking along the roads or hitching a ride into Bushnell on a haywagon were called "tramps," but those arriving illegally on a freight train, or found in the vicinity of either of the two railroad rights-of-way, were called "hobos." The large number of both in 1931 was due to the fact that we were well into the grit and gristle of the Great Depression. Hobos outnumbered tramps in Bushnell because it was bisected

by two railroads: the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy (CB&Q), running north and south through the center of town; and the TP&W, which stood for Toledo, Peoria, & Western, passing through at right angles from east to west. So many good men were out of work that being a hobo was no longer a presumption of worthlessness, although various degrees of suspicion remained. My father, Samuel A. Wilson, then the local Justice of the Peace, was highly distrustful of them all.

Because we lived on a dirt road in the southern edge of town—a road called Front Street, which ran near and parallel to the CB&Q railroad—we had more than our share of visiting hobos asking for food. They were seldom successful at our house since we had few leftovers, and those were fed to the two or three dogs we had around the place. The dogs' only other food source were the rabbits, squirrels, or rodents they could catch during their forays along the creeks and gullies outside of town. Trying to buy food prepared for dogs in a grocery store would have been as strange as trying to buy a saddle in a jewelry store. As a few hobos discovered, however, there were exceptions. If my mother had made Hungarian goulash, or her own style of pork and beans (she always made enough for 3 or 4 days), and the hobo didn't look too dirty, and the wood stove fire was already going, *and* we could be pretty sure my father would not show up unexpectedly, she would most likely tell the man that, if he would wait on the rear porch steps for a few minutes, he could have a bowl full and some bread. The man of course always waited, but none were invited into the house.

One of the things that my younger brother, Maurice (who was seven), and I never mentioned, even to our mother, was that we and the Ross brothers had discovered the hobo camp about a mile and a half south of town. The camp was only a clearing in the tall brush near the edge of the railroad right-of-way, out of sight from the trains. The story around town was that many of the hobos were dangerous—some with prison records. We talked to a number of them, but none seemed dangerous to us. A few that were very quiet would act mean and unfriendly when we tried to talk to them. In those cases, one of the other men would usually say something like, "Don't you fellers mind old Charlie (or whatever his name was); he just got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. Didn't ya', Charlie?" Most of them had great stories to tell about faraway places, but did not talk a great deal about their families. They liked especially to tell us about fun things when they were our age and times were better.

Once in a while, if we hadn't been gone from home for too long, and had found a hobo showing signs of starvation, or perhaps one that we especially liked, we would try to get him to promise not to leave for a half hour or so. Then we would run home as fast as we could, pretending to be famished, fill our pockets with apples, bananas, sandwiches, cookies or whatever we could talk our mother out of, and run back to the hobo camp.

One of our favorites was a man considerably different from the others, the only hobo who somehow didn't look the part, and who never seemed to be broke. Through the late 1920s and start of the 1930s he had been a prizefighter and his name was "Kid" Gattis. He was quiet but friendly. It seemed to me that he was quiet only until he was sure that you were actually interested in him and in what he had to say. Then he would talk for a long time about his fights, his travels, and his adventures. He stayed around the camp for three days—we preferred to think it was because he liked us as much as we liked him. He would not accept food or any kind of hand out, but gave us money to buy such things as soda, crackers, a ring of bologna, and cheese to bring back to the camp, which we did gladly.

"Kid" Gattis was not only an unusual hobo, he was the only one we were to see *again*, a year later. As before, it was springtime and only a few days after the beginning of summer vacation—but he found *us* this time. He knew we lived someplace on Front Street, which was only four blocks long, so he strolled up and down until one of us came out.

We had a great time getting reacquainted. He had fought in three matches while away—two in Chicago the summer before, and one later in New Orleans. In his mid-thirties then, he told us that he had only won one of the three matches, and that his fighting days were now over. But we were to change his mind.

A carnival had arrived in town three days earlier. The rides and shows had been set up on Korn's Lot, where they would be through tomorrow. Maurice and I had not been able to go, but the Ross brothers had been there and had told us how everybody disliked the men at the boxing concession. The hawker's job must have been to infiltrate the men in the audience so much that they would agree to fight the carnival's boxer. If the local challenger won, he would get to keep all of the gate receipts for that fight, but the local man never won. Dave said their boxer was a brute they called "Cyclone," and there was no referee for the fight. The fight was over when one or the other was unconscious, admitted defeat, or for any reason couldn't answer the bell. The rounds were three minutes each, but if Cyclone hadn't been defeated in three rounds, the fight was over and they kept the receipts. Most of the fights didn't go three rounds, Dave said, because Cyclone cheated. While in a clinch, he would butt the challenger in the face with his head so that our man was often blinded by his own blood. Or he would knee our man in the groin and then pound him senseless while he was bent over in agony.

In spite of our pleading, "Kid" Gattis would not agree to challenge Cyclone. He said that the carnival's man was obviously a brawling street fighter, and that he probably wouldn't do any better than the others. We didn't believe that and finally got him to agree to go with us after our supper, just to "look the carnival over." As agreed, he met us at the corner near the tiny store run by Mr. Fugate's widow, and from there all five of us walked the four or five blocks to Korn's Lot and the carnival.

By 7:00 p.m. the carnival was fairly crowded and most of the men and boys were at the tent that housed the boxing ring. The hawker was up on the narrow platform out front. He was saying that there were rumors in Macomb, Galesburg, and other parts of the state that Bushnell was full of blowhards, with the backbones of mice. "Your town is full of gutless wonders," he yelled at the crowd. Then the hawker spotted us and immediately went to work on our hobo friend (looking neat, and not at all like a hobo), asking him if he wanted his young buddies to find out what a coward he really was. After a little more of that kind of talk, "Kid" Gattis motioned us to the edge of the crowd for a huddle so that he could talk to us. He said that he should have more sense, but that he had decided to fight the Cyclone after all.

When our excitement finally subsided a little, the barker was saying, "Okay, Mr. Ross, your cousins will be admitted without charge and we agree to announce the gate *before* the first round."

I'm going to omit my recollection of the details because it was indeed a brutal fight—which the "Kid" (alias John Ross) won in the 3rd round. There were no more fights during the carnival's remaining stay. The Cyclone was literally out-of-commission.

The tent had been packed with townspeople and nearby farmers, who almost demolished the place in their wild joy at having been avenged. Many crowded around "Mr. Ross" after the fight to pound him on the back and urge Dave and Don to bring him by their shops, or their houses, during his visit. As we left Korn's Lot, the four of us kids were so proud we each could have exploded into a million pieces with no regrets. Our gallant friend also insisted on sharing the gate receipts before he left for camp.

With all the excitement, my brother and I got very little sleep that night and, first thing the next morning, we ran to the hobo camp—without waiting for Dave or Don. But the only hobo

there, warming coffee over a Sterno can, said that Gattis had caught the "Twelve-ten" north last night, and that he was "probably halfway to Chicago by now."

We never saw him again, although we kept hoping that he would reappear throughout the Depression years. We made friends (secretly) with other hobos during those years, but now, after sixty more summers have gone by, none stand out in our memory as clearly as our friend, and our hero, the great "Kid" Gattis.

HOWARD AND ME AND THE MODEL T

Russell Stump

In 1933, I was a sophomore at Plymouth High School, fifteen years old, and had a part-time job at Ralph Armstrong's Shell Filling Station. Putting in gasoline and checking oil gave me a chance to look under the hoods of many different models and makes of cars at a time when improvements were coming thick and fast. Up until this time, heaters and radios were extra equipment that didn't work very well, and every car came equipped with a crank for starting when the battery was low, which was most of the time.

Ralph's mechanic, "Happy" Williams, let me help him take engines apart, and do other maintenance work on the cars that were brought there for repair. I was fascinated with engines, and I wanted a car so badly that I decided to put one together myself.

A close friend, Howard Rigsbee, equally eager, agreed to help me, and the search began. The frame was found in one place, the rear axle assembly in another, and the front axle with wheels from yet another abandoned or wrecked Model T Ford. These T-Models had been in production from 1914 till 1927 with very little change in design, and the derelicts were rusting in fence corners and barns all across the fruited plain.

We got a complete engine, which included the transmission, from an old ice truck, and a radiator, too. With a gas tank bolted to the frame, a seat cushion wired to the frame, and the engine bolted in place, our creation was beginning to show a little promise. We were putting it together in my father's barn, across the alley from the filling station. All gasoline stations were called filling stations at this time. And self service was unthinkable. The gasoline pump had a see-through glass container at the top that held ten gallons of gas. There were graduated marks to indicate how many gallons drained into the car. Then you pumped it back up to the full ten gallons by a hand pump.

We took hacksaws and cold chisels to cut the front part of a touring car body so we could mount the steering column down low to give the car a racy look. There was no battery as the engine had its own built-in magneto. Neither did we put on fenders or running boards, hardly any floorboards, and no doors on this collection of salvaged parts that we called our Whoopie Car. It took awhile to get four tires and inner tubes, but all this assembling was done in high spirits and with higher expectations. One of the greatest thrills was when we started the engine for the first time. It was very temperamental, and took many adjustments of the carburetor, the timer, the choke, and the throttle, but we did not despair. "Happy" Williams had told us we would never learn anything until we had trouble. We learned plenty. It had no muffler, and blue flame came out of the short exhaust pipe. It was loud and beautiful.

Howard and I were very happy with our Whoopie Car, and drove it with reckless abandon on back roads without a license to fishing holes, swimming holes, and watermelon patches. No girls, though—I guess they knew the danger.

When we got our car fine-tuned, we could just give a little push in gear and it would start right away. We had lots of fun,

but never had an accident in spite of the crazy things we did, like hit the brake (rear wheels only) and spin around, or go fast over a hill to get airborne.

There was one trip to the Rigsbee farm that put an end to this foolishness. Howard's father, Everett Rigsbee, mistakenly agreed to let us take him to the farm, for want of any other means at the time. It could have been fatal. I drove going out; it was about ten miles. On the way I could hear the differential gears jumping a cog now and then, but it didn't seem serious.

Coming back, Howard was driving. Everett sat beside him on the bench seat, while I was perched on the bare frame behind them, holding onto the gas tank.

We were whistling right along, and skidding a little on the corners, which were square on those narrow country roads. As we approached Snake Branch Hill, a near perpendicular stretch of country lane, Howard did a broadslide into the first turn of an S-curve at the top of the hill. He came down hard on the brake pedal, and the teeth began stripping off the ring gear like a row of falling dominoes. The brakes on a Model T are on the transmission, not the wheels. When the rear end goes, there go the brakes, too. We had been cut loose.

As we slung into the second turn, I was getting worried. Everett had one leg out already as he clutched the cowl with one hand and his hat with the other. As we topped the crest, that one lane plank bridge at the bottom of the hill looked to be about two inches wide. Everett yelled, "jump boys, jump, jump!" I bailed off the back end and tumbled like a rag doll in the rocks and weeds of the roadside. It is a wonder that I did not break every bone in my body. Howard sat, frozen to the steering wheel like a dive bomber pilot on a suicide mission. He had his cap on backwards, squinting in the wind. They disappeared over the crest in a cloud of dust. Moments later I heard the clatter-clatter, and knew they had crossed the bridge—or fallen through it.

Painfully I got to my feet and limped down the hill. They were way out in the bottom, but I heard Howard's father say, "When I say jump, I mean right now." Howard replied, "Bu, Bu, Bu, But Dad, I was waitin' for you."

That episode ended our fun with the Whoopie Car—but only for a little while. We bought Mr. Nussman's 1914 Model T touring car that had a classic brass radiator. It cost us $15.00. (In that condition now it would be worth thousands.) We stripped it down to look like a Whoopie Car, and we were on the road again.

WORLD WAR II: THE HOME FRONT

Betty L. Hardwick

World War II really began for our family the warm day in 1941 when my brother walked away down our country lane to go into the army. None of us realized then just how close war was hovering.

I was fourteen and a freshman in a small-town high school. We lived in the country and had no radio, and on that weekend, no visitors. The first I knew of the attack on Pearl Harbor was on Monday morning at school when the principal's newspaper headline blackly stated, "WAR DECLARED." My first thought was of my brother, who had finished his basic training by then.

Fast on the heels of that drastic news came the changes. There were hard, heart-wrenching but exciting occasions when our "boys" left for service, and our whole school would go down to the depot to meet the troop train as it came through, to say our good-byes. The high school boys looked solemn, probably thinking of how soon they too would be riding a troop train, and

the girls tearfully tried to keep smiling at those going away to service.

Rationing became a way of life. It seemed as if everything from shoes, to food, to sugar, to some types of clothing was rationed or hard to get. But the rationing of food did not bother us much as we raised our own. Except for sugar and coffee, that is. We never had enough sugar. My folks used to trade meat stamps for sugar stamps.

Rationing of gasoline and tires created a real problem for some. We young ones walked back and forth to school or to church. I often rode or drove a horse. The weather had to be really bad for me to be taken to school in the car. In the winter when the walk into town was too harsh, I worked for my board in town so that I could continue my education.

During my senior year of high school, I went to school at the county seat—approximately fifteen miles away—and, for a time, boarded in the country with friends. We always had to start early for school as my friends' old car had tread-bare tires. It was a rare day that we didn't have at least one "flat," and sometimes we had more.

I recall the inanity of myself and my friend scrambling around in the rain changing a tire while her older sister tried to hold an umbrella over us both. I also learned firsthand about the rationing business that year as I took my turn working in the Ration Office at the county seat.

Rain! Rain! Lordy, how it did rain during those years. It was as if the big guns blasted the heavens apart and they couldn't stop crying. Rivers and creeks were bank full and overflowing. Soldiers were sent into the area to sandbag levees and help those fleeing the lowlands. Getting the crops in became an ordeal, and once they were finally in and up, cultivating them was another ordeal as the wet ground couldn't be worked.

Manpower was "scarce as hen's teeth." Nearly all the young men (and many not-so-young) were in service or war work. Women took their places everywhere—in factories, on machines, in the hospitals, behind desks (both military and civilian), in stores, in airplanes, and on the farms. I and many other farm girls and wives worked beside our fathers or husbands. We put in the crops, pitched hay, shocked wheat, took care of animals, helped with the milking, etc. Personally, the chore I hated was milking, and probably the cow hated to see me coming at her with a milk pail.

The days were long and often the work was monotonous. One day, as I drove a three-horse team to a harrow, I dozed off. When I awoke, I was lying directly underneath their heels. Well-trained and gentle as they were, they had just stopped the instant I fell. After that, I made an effort to stay awake.

Our dimes and quarters went mostly for victory stamps. The filled booklets were then traded in for bonds. We joined in "Scrap Drives." No pile of old iron was left unmolested. Uncle Sam needed it all. Posters were everywhere warning us that "Loose talk sinks ships." Enemy ears could be anywhere—even in our little country town.

Our family acquired a radio soon after the war began. I well remember the deep voice of Gabriel Heater, the newscaster, as he would begin his nightly news account. "Ah, yes," he'd intone, "there is grim (or good) news tonight." My brother had been sent overseas among the first troops. We, like every other serviceman's family, lived in dread of a telegram beginning with "The War Department regrets. . . ." When it did come, it said he was wounded—terrifying news, and there was no way to know how badly. Yet, it was better news than many others around us were receiving.

Late in the war, my eldest brother had to leave his wife and brood of small children to report for duty with the Navy. We were a saddened family that went to meet him on his way to the Great Lakes Training Center. Fortunately, he was kept in the states in the postal department at Great Lakes.

During those winters I spent in town, in the homes of servicemen's families, I saw a lot of what the war meant to them. It was a time of just waiting the war out. Women, alone with little ones, were valiantly trying to keep the home going and lived on hope and prayers. Mothers and fathers prayerfully worked and waited. Girls waited for the return of sweethearts. Loneliness became a way of life for many. They lived on hopes and letters from camps across the land and over the water, and they sent return letters with pictures showing how much junior had grown and planning for "after the war."

The war was especially tough on some couples. I remember writing a letter to President Roosevelt for a friend who had a child destined to die, asking that her husband be kept stateside. She received a courteous reply, but her husband was soon sent overseas. I recall, too, how helpless I felt as I held a friend who cried bitterly when her fiancé was killed.

The war overshadowed everything. Not even going to the movies did a great deal to take one's mind off it. There was always a newscast of battles that preceded the movie and cartoons. We cringed in our seats as the screen lit up with the exploding bombs, ships, or planes. Those newscasts really brought the war home.

One of the saddest and hardest parts of those years at our house really wasn't much related to the war. It was during those years that Mom, so lively and once involved in everything going on in the neighborhood, began to slip deeper and deeper into the shadowy maze of Alzheimer's Disease. At that time, no one called it that. We only knew that the doctors said there was no way to help her. Fifty plus years later, I can still picture her on a cold winter's night, sitting beside the heating stove conversing with the darkened window, convinced that she was visiting with her soldier son.

Still, there were some good times, in spite of it all. When the boys came home on furloughs or weekend passes, we laughed and pretended it was all going to be over soon. These were the high spots for families and friends, as well as for the servicemen. There were times when we'd dance in the old KC Hall until the walls shook, and we would temporarily forget our anxiety.

There were also times when we bowed our heads in church to say, "Thank you, Lord" that the battles weren't in our land, and other times when just being united in a common cause with other Americans gave us a warm feeling of a struggle made worthwhile.

It was a tough time to come of age.

List of Authors

LIST OF AUTHORS

Tales from Two Rivers VI is comprised of manuscripts selected from *Tales from Two Rivers* writing contests XI, XII, XIII, and XIV. The following is a listing of all authors who submitted stories to these writing contests. Their manuscripts are part of the *Tales from Two Rivers* collection at Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University Library.

Adams
Bloom, Kathryn M.
Cox, Georgia A.
Dodson, Madge Bates
Ehrhardt, Florence
Geraci, Nicasio "Cass"
Hulsen, Bob
Luckett, Josephine J.
Lyter, Carol A.
Morrison, Fritzi Morhenstecher
Pobanz, Rev. Phil R.
Politsch, Leroy J.
Rice, Vera L.
Rittler, Bessie
Schaberg, Betty A.
Seger, Mildred Davis
Shelton, Helen Shepherd
Sparks, Ruby
Tenhouse, Bonnie Sue
Turner, Helen B.
Ufkes, Albertus F.
Waite, Truman W.
Ward, Harvey E.
Zimmerman, Robert

Boone
Kelly, Ame

Brown
Geisler, Milly
Keyes, Velma
Miller, Billie
Roe, Nellie F.
Wronski, Edward A.

Bureau
Dunn, James J.
Ickes, Helen Arnold

Calhoun
Anderson, Elizabeth Bloomer
Siemer, Anthony L.

Cass
Kirchner, Janette
Miller, Hazel
Pate, Vivian May
Peck, Marie C.
Thompson, Dorothy G.

Champaign
Clark, Marlys R.
Ijams, Ethel W.

Christian
Durbin, Mary Anne
Ferchow, Ruth
Trapp, Alice Rountree

Clinton
Goodwin, Catherine
Fitzpatrick, Peggy

Coles
Otto, Don H.

Cook
Bridges, Mary
Coyle, John J.
Holmberg, C. L.
Howard, Jeanette
Iorio, Jack
Jurkovich, Sister M.
Koeroesi, Dorothy Suzanne
Lopienski, Olga
Loss, Martha B.
Nugent, Ed
Olsen, Lil
Simpson, Vera B.
Sorokin, Florence

Crawford
Watt, Arlene

Cumberland
Rollings, Frieda Schoby

DeKalb
Elven, Martha

Hatcher, Betty L. (Grimes)
Hawbaker, Arthur
Johnson, William R.
Mankus, Antoinette
Prall, Elizabeth
Prall, Ivan E.
Snyder, Vera M.
Wetzel, Martha E.
Wiltberger, Grace E.
Woodstrups, Thomas E.
Wright, Vivian I.

DuPage
Fink, Alfred
Kett, Edward T.
Lorimer, Signa
Porth, Surella
Simonson, Alice M.
Zinn, Wilbur Odbert

Edgar
Artman, Margaret E. (Lamb)
Strow, Rosemary

Edwards
Server, Lela Jaggers

Effingham
Shadwell, Nelle

Fayette
Johnson, Helen E.

Ford
Sauer, Wilber

Fulton
Bultemeier, Ruth
Conrad, Betty J.
Davis, F. Eugene
Efnor, Louise E.
Hickerson, Margaret
Hickerson, Maurice J.
Kost, Betty Flynn
Lafferty, Mahala Y.
Lowary, Floyd M.
McCarty, Donald
Myers, Helen M.
Neal, Neva
Pickel, Gladys Gard
Pyles, Phealty Edward
Reffett, Annabelle
Sallee, Dorothy Logan
Thomson, Esmarelda Tatham
Thomson, William E.
Webb, Floyd L.
Welch, M.D., James K.
Workman, Garnet
Wright, Mary Ruth

Greene
Anderson, Helen Hoehn
Chapman, Floy K.
Costello, Lou
Cunningham, A. Eileen
Dawdy, Lucille
Ford, Helen (Clanton)
Hanback, Louise
Hardwick, Betty L.
Stout, Viola

Grundy
Hertenstein, Les
Lyons, Raymond E.

Hancock
Boston, Lydia Jo
Cowdery, Olaf
Curtis, Loren S.
Howard, Dorothy Stoneking
Kerberick, Dorothy Boyer
McClintock, Elden L.
Ourth, Florence
Scheuermann, Mattie F.
Snyder, Lillian M.
Terry, Lyle G.
Van Horn, Ruth C.

Henderson
Grafton, Nellie
Perry, Faye Christian

Henry
Bevington, Shirley
Brown, Norma P.
DeDecker, Margaret M.
Gillespie, Pearl A.
Magerkurth, Charlotte
Nash, Marilyn Hade
Nelson, Dorothy M.
Palm, Donna J.
Rasmussen, Marvis
Richards, Sr., Robert C.

Jackson
Guida, Mary L.

Kupel, Claudia
Russell, Margaret C.

Jersey
Berry, Bonnie Lee
Bohannon, Audrey
Cravens, Katherine N.
Dintelmann, Marjorie R.
Dunsing, Ida P.
Fester, Maurita
Freesmeyer, Marie
Wagenblast, Mildred
Wieland, Martha Jean

Kane
Grove, Shirley
Houghton, Lois
Johnsen, Ruth
Rausch, Rosemary
Robinson, Marilyn
Schuett, Eleanor
Springborn, W. T.
Thomas, Mary Ahrens
Turner, Mary E.

Kankakee
Carpenter, Fran

Kendall
Christian, Arvis

Knox
Beaty, Eileen
Bouseman, Maurice
Colbert, Virginia M.
Hawkinson, Maxine
Lewis, Shirley Mooney
Lopeman, Mary Inez Beamer
Lowman, Mary Cullen
Mangieri, Guisseppi
Noecker, Duane
Reagor, Rena M.
Schisler, Doris
Simms, Louise Parker
Taylor, Lolabel Walden
Verene, Eleanor Grant

Lake
Dahlmann, Eleanora
Hain, Thea
Kopochis, Martha A.
Lincoln, Marjorie H.
Prokaski, Jarmila
Sharvy, Ruth B.

LaSalle
Berry, Dorothy Benedict
Brown, Eleanor Jontry
Burns, Robert Taylor
Johnson, Goldie Taylor
Thompson, Marguerite

Lawrence
Shoultz, Doris T.

Lee
Lutz, Delbert
Peterson, Lillian Schick
Weitzel, Wilbert

Livingston
Kennedy, Ann
Martens, Louis C.
Mossberger, M. J.
Stoutmeyer, Louise Plaster

Logan
Bryson, William E. (Bill)
Gardner, Wanda Kirby
Kopatz, Betty Lou Aderman
Larson, Marjorie E. Griffith
Lynch, Eugenia

Macon
Buckmaster, Elsie E.
Rainey, Mary

Macoupin
Ballinger, Lucille
Loveless, Marie McWilliams
Lynn, Gertrude K.
Nimmons, Maxine I.
Schmidt, Helen T.
Scott, Laura J.
Steinmeyer, Nancy S.

Madison
Allen, Mary J. Pearson
Best, Eleanor
Blackledge, Ethel H.
Bonnell, Dorothy J.
Bramstedt, Christine
Chappell, Loraine
Falkenheim, Nellie Bushong
Henson, Mary E.

Iberg, Grace C.
Luber, Herbert A.
McCalla, Alice
Murrie, Natalie
Patchet, Frances E.
Schiber, Anne (Granny)
Weaver, Dolores M.
Wenzel, Anita C.

Marion
Holsapple, Phyllis
Oliver, Frances

Marshall
Bussell, Eleanor H.
Kuhn, Grayce E.

Mason
Dierker, Elizabeth
Garlisch Joann (Whiteley)
Powers, Hollis Sheldon
Riggins, Franklin M.

Massac
Green, Beulah Pearl

McDonough
Abbot, Betty
Bartlett, Jesse D.
Beck, Vivian
Bricker, Harriet
Campbell, Effie L.
Cordell, Harriet (Wetzel)
Foster, Pearl Jackson
Frankenberger, R. L.
Graham, Burdette
Graham, Martha K.
Hammond, Ruth Reynolds
Little, Robert
Morley, Juanita Jordan
Purdy, Darlene
Robeson, Glen M.
Rogers, Ruth
Sharp, Richard
Stevens, Mary Cecile
Thompson, Billie
Toland, Rosann Smith
Vaughn, Jessie "McNeeley"
Viar, Betty B.
Waller, Ray J.
Willey, Esther Fowler
Wisslead, Marjorie

McHenry
Wittrock, Edwin C.

McLean
Baltz, Wilson M.
Hancock, Fern
Morris, Bettina M.
Yoder, Marguerite

Menard
Albritton, Jack
Grosboll, Clara Jean
Sullivan, William H.

Mercer
Lipton, Fred
Nelson, Marilyn S.
Simpson, Louis

Monroe
Brown, Ura Eisenbart
Hartman, Albert E.
Hartman, Emil C.
Hesterberg, Florence
Spytek, Sue

Montgomery
Miller, Chester
Moore, Lorna G.

Morgan
Defrates, William L.
Fenton, Phyllis T.
Hardy, Elizabeth
Koehler, Olive Orris
Pacatte, Sr., Marcel E.
Sievers, Emily McCullough
Stephenson, Kathryn
Tholen, Bea

Ogle
Buskohl, Esther E.
Jacobs, Leonard J.
Knol, Kathryn P.
Millhouse, Ann

Peoria
Adams, Mary Lou
Altum, Norma
Athen, Joan F.
Beall, Marjorie J.
Berman, Jeanne

Bliss, Helen C.
Chaffee, George
Conlan, Mary Jane
Dahlheim, Effie D.
Doubet, Betty
Feuchter, Harriet Lucy
Fruehauf, Jean Maticka
Hannah, Margaret
Hutt, June Thomason
Kamalick, Joe
Keyster, Erwin
Kohrs, Walter E.
Lamb, Glenna Howard
Malmgren, Darline
McMenamin, Hugh
Meister, Lucy
Meyer, Elaine
Pope, June K.
Russell, Bessie M.
Simmons, Mary Jane
Smith, Marjorie M.
Sperling, Edwardine
Van Dyke, Farol M.
Wahl, Jean Anne
White, John G.

Piatt
Meyer, Ethel R.
Pierson, Myrtle
Walker, Guyneth
Weber, Suzanne
Wood, Barbara W.

Pike
Bartelt, Ellen M.
Brim, Genevieve Dorsey
Brooks, Mildred
Brown, Ruby
Ervin, Viola
Grimes, Velva A.
Howdeshell, Gene

Pope
Watson, Eva Baker

Randolph
Rittenhouse, Ethel Anna Kessel

Rock Island
Chatterton, June Speer
Chatterton, Keith
Cleek, Erma Martin
Lashbrook, Blondelle
Minteer, Ruth
Nash, Dorris Taylor
Pierce, Anne C.
Rowe, Eleanor R.
Witter, Evelyn

St. Clair
Bauer, Doris M.
Brooks, Marie Ostrander
Gedda, Marilyn Horner
Hall, Clarence Gore
Holcomb, Cyrus
Oliver, Charles C.
Rhodes, Virginia Roy
Schmidt, Elsa E.
Sturman, Lavern
Welch, Grace R.

Sangamon
Alexander, Mavis M.
Bennett, Virginia Haenig
Boesdorfer, Doris
Chopp, Sr. M. Thaddine
Frantzreb, Marjorie H.
Kelly, Marti Oughton
Kish, Ruby Davenport
Kotner, Vivian Barton
Lane, Mary
Mann, Bert
McIntyre, Max N.
Midden, Dr. Mary L. W.
Newcome, Violet P.
Rilling, Helen E.
Ross, Dorothy Marcussen
Rowe, Max L.
Rowe, Maxine M.
Spring, Clariece
Stanfield, Wilmogene
Stickney, Virginia T.
Taft, Jean "Jack"
Urban, Bill

Schuyler
Baker, Larry D.
Bartlett, Jess D.
Bartlow, William P.
Turner, Nell Marie Dace
Vaughn, Esther

Scott
Howard, Evelyn
Hutchings, Stella Howard
Lovekamp, Bernice

Shelby
Harless, Helen C.

Tazewell
Armstrong, Lois I.
Ballard, Shirley G.
Eaton, Ralph
Keely, Jean
Kumpf, Gertrude E.
Livingston, Grace Bishop
Makurat, Bernice F.
Norton, Sr., Ralph C.
Richmond, Ruey
Roberts, Jan
Rockhill, D. R.
Schott, Deloria
Smith, Laston L.
Stormer, Mary C.
Stump, Russell L.

Union
Cowan, James E.

Vermilion
Anders, Dorothy
Blakey, Opal E. Burge
Bollar, L. Jean
Dequimpaul, Mary
Freymiller, Ed
Gerrib, Catherine Lynch
Knight, Irene E.
Lynch, Jessie Beaver
Messner, Mary Garnett
Morrow, Edna R.
Sheppard, Edna Ruth
Underwood, Edna
Vandenberg, Phyllis Bray

Warren
Fitch, Mary L.
Hutchins, Avis Lawhorn
Keller, Nanthea Wallace
Ray, Dorothy E.
Speer, Dick

Whiteside
Beckstrom, Frances C.
Cichoke, Anthony J.

Will
Bazzarone, Lillian
Blessent, Dolores
Bourrie, Catherine Shuster
Buffo, Ellen
Fletcher, Dorothy Nolden
Hameister, Zephyrine Werner
Lind, Irene M.
Matheis, Elsie
Mavrich, Dorothy
McDonald, Cecilia
McKee, Grace
McNabb, Jessie E.
Wagner, Louise

Williamson
Bouman, Geraldine

Winnebago
Lorimer, Signa

Woodford
Sellman, Zelda Hedden

Out of State
Ames, Lois L. (New Mexico)
Becker, Carl F. (California)
Brasel, Kenneth R. (Arizona)
Brownlee, Robert L. (Florida)
Danielson, Ernest E. (Iowa)
Hilton, Geraldine (Florida)
Jackson, James B. (Florida)
Miller, N. Suzanne (Iowa)
Nau, Jennie B. (Colorado)
Taylor, Ruth Gash (Iowa)
Wilson, Warren W. (California)

"The long walk to the infirmary seemed endless, but finally I reached the small bed at the end of the room. There lay Sister Teresa. Her eyes were still big and blue, but her frail body was wasted away with cancer. As she held my hand and smiled, I remembered the happy days gone by. We talked about the things we had done as novices. Even though I could see she was getting tired, she never said so, or gave a thought to herself; she just wanted to please me. Then I realized that this beautiful person was everything I had always wanted to be."

More Than a Friend
Shirley Ballard

"I remember on this spot there stood
The largest tree in the neighborhood.
Nearby, there was a small clear brook
Where I'd pretend to bait my hook."

Memories of My Home Town
Marie Ostrander Brooks

"While I tried to keep the baby warm and clean, Lyle went job hunting. After a really heartbreaking winter, we moved to another farm several miles away. The house there was filthy and rat infested. Getting it livable and rid of the rats took too much out of me. I had to put the baby on the bottle. The working conditions were more than my weakened husband could handle, too. Two months of it were all we could take."

Married Life at the End of the Depression
Myrtle Pierson

"My father was a product of the social-economic conditions of the country at that time. He was, in some ways, a heroic casualty of World War I. There had been this war to end all wars, prohibition, the stock market crash, and the Great Depression. While some were jumping out of windows, not able to face adversity, my father dug in his heels and went to work. His edges were a little rough, but, like a diamond, there was a great deal of strength and beauty beneath those edges. He and his kind were the solid foundation upon which this country continued to thrive. I can only be proud of him and pleased that I have some of his strengths and many values."

The Man Who Had No Values
Shirley Lewis

"In the early 1900s, before most of the inhabitants of Roseville were able to enjoy the wonders of Thomas A. Edison's electric lighting in their own homes, the façade of Roseville's Isis Theatre glittered with a brilliance that attracted crowds of people like honey attracts flies. Other than the public library, which was always there for those who found books to be entertaining, the Isis Theatre was the only regularly open, organized, for-everyone-source-of-entertainment in Roseville. It vied for attention with the churches . . . Baptist, Christian, Congregational, and Methodist Episcopal. Probably most Roseville people spent more time per week sitting in the uncomfortable theatre seats than in the even more uncomfortable pews in the churches."

The Isis Theatre in Roseville
Martha K. Graham

"She walked down the main street of the little midwestern town with a masculine stride, the shabby violin case swinging rhythmically from her strong arm. Her clothes were plain and outmoded, but the violin case looked like a badge of courage with which to face the world."

My Poor Violin Teacher
Signa Lorimer

"The decade of the 1930s was not the most ideal time to be pursuing ambitious dreams. Without interruption, the Great Depression not only kept a firm grip over our land like a disease, but spread its unpleasant influence far and wide. Money, in many cases, was almost nonexistent. Still, those dismal years may have been the best of times to take stock of our lives and prepare ourselves for the future, which was, at best, almost totally obscured in economic darkness. With little profitable work and plenty of time on our hands, staying in school was, without a doubt, one of the best decisions a member of our generation could have made."

My High School Years
Katherine (Nola Thornton) Cravens

"Years ago when I was growing up, neighbors were not just acquaintances who lived down the road, but dear friends who shared good and bad times with each other. They were characterized by always lending a helping hand when it was needed."

Farm Neighbors
Florence Hesterberg